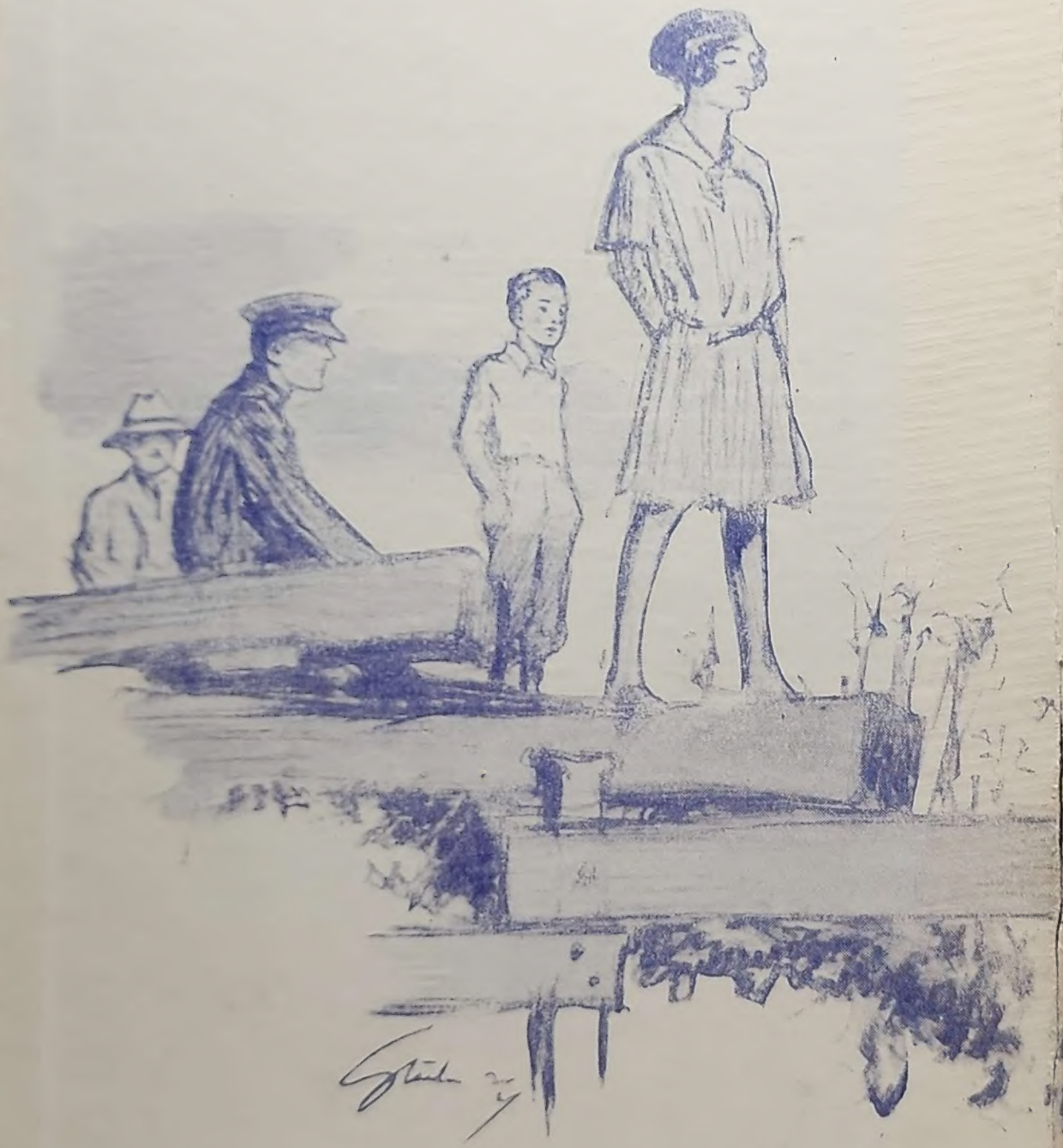
CARMELLA COMMANDS

by

WALTER S. BALL

WITH DRAWINGS
BY
FREDERIC DORR STEELE



Children of Foreign-Born Parents

The world friendship ideal of the Junior Red Cross is given local application on as many of the CALENDAR pages as possible, by suggested activities for, and especially *with*, schoolmates whose parents are foreign-born. In many city schools, there is opportunity to begin near home in appreciating the culture and the native gifts of people of other countries. In such friendship, there is no room for condescension; mutual respect is implicit. Among recent books, one which develops this ideal is the prize-winning girl's novel, "Carmella Commands," by Walter S. Ball, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1929, $2.

One scarcely dares call the book an "Americanization" novel, for Carmella, the 13-year-old Italian heroine, is contemptuous of "all this Americanization stuff" and refuses to be called *Americanized;* she is nothing short of *American.* Enlightening episodes are found in the chapters that tell of how Carmella's mother, Mrs. Coletta, secretly conquered the American language; and, earlier in the story, a conversation in which Carmella explains to the volunteer social worker, Mrs. Barrington, that Mrs. Coletta is much better qualified to teach the social workers how to make fine lace than to be taught by them. If you are a trifle high-hat when you begin reading, Kid-Kate, as she is nicknamed, will have you wriggling within a chapter or two. Indeed, adverse criticism is much more likely to result from the touched feelings of the Mrs. Barringtons, who resent a characterization that is almost caricature, than from fear of the realism with which "little Italy" is portrayed. This reviewer, never having been a social worker, is, even so, a little sensitive over the settlement house. Certainly these pictures are not all-sided; but they have their truth and one must charge the rest to humorist's license.

Read the story with humor, but with respect for the girl who is above all a true American lady. Through her young genius, other immigrant children are won to attendance at the well-intentioned but languishing settlement house, the senior Colettas and their neighbors are led to learn the American language, an Italian mother is saved from complete heartbreak over her scapegrace son. You will enjoy it all far more than a staring tour through foreign sections, for in the book you will readily identify your sympathies with Kid-Kate and will belong with her friends, as only sensitive genius or years of residence could make you belong, in fact. Though called a "girl's novel," because of its heroine, the story will give enjoyment to both sexes and all ages.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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CARMELLA COMMANDS

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FIRST EDITION

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CARMELLA COMMANDS

Chapter One

CARMELLA TAKES HER TIME

SOME elusive something was holding back the sewing class from the mark which Mrs. Barrington had set for it.

That mark, as all who knew Mrs. Barrington could easily guess, was preëminence among the many activities of the settlement house. Preëminence absolute and acknowledged. She had accepted the post of chairman only because Mrs. Whitman Russell had asked her. Mrs. Russell was one of those whose invitations are not refused.

But the class almost maliciously refused to prosper. Some perversity haunted it. Some spirit of ingratitude among these foreign women whom she was trying to help.

Sitting alone in the white-walled room, from which her slender gathering had just been dismissed, Mrs. Barrington reviewed the problem. Being anxious, she was half-angry. Being half-angry, she thought swiftly.

Like a trained tactician in social matters, she knew that for every effect there was a cause, and that in most cases the cause was some form of personal prejudice.

Always, moreover, there was some one who knew—if only that some one could be induced to tell.

"Miss Sargle!" she called as the new superintendent of Hope House passed the door.

"Yes, Mrs. Barrington!"

Miss Sargle entered briskly, confident and smiling, as any graduate of any social service institute should do.

"What," demanded the sponsor of the sewing class, "is the matter?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Miss Sargle calmly.

To her, as it happened, the sewing class for Italian mothers was one of the least of the Hope House interests. For years it had been the institution's ugly duckling, kept alive only because Mrs. Russell, the president, insisted.

Although she was a recent comer to the house, Miss Sargle had quickly imbibed all the managerial prejudices against the sewing class, which undoubtedly a graduate of a social service school should not do.

She could not be expected to know, moreover, its importance to Mrs. Barrington, sponsoring it at Mrs. Whitman Russell's request.

"Why don't the women come?" insisted Mrs. Barrington.

"I wish I could tell," said the superintendent. "It's hard to understand these foreigners, you know. And remember that the Italians in this district are not the

newest comers—they're complicated, somehow, by having lived here, and by their children who—who—well, you know, Mrs. Barrington, by the complexity of it all."

"Complicated by its complexity is an excellent explanation, Miss Sargle, if we don't want to do anything about it," said Mrs. Barrington icily.

Miss Sargle flushed. The institute had taught her more about classes than it had about sponsors.

She was beginning to feel cheated by her education, when she had a happy inspiration.

"Couldn't Mrs. Scalzo tell you?" she asked.

Mrs. Scalzo was the skilled lace-maker who actually taught the class under Mrs. Barrington's direction.

"She might, if she would. But for some reason she won't. I've asked her. So that is that."

"Then," said Miss Sargle, "I'm afraid ——"

Mrs. Barrington cut through:

"Who is there around here who would know, and would tell, and talks English?"

"That's a hard question," said Miss Sargle, clasping her hands. "Probably it's some indefinite feeling—something hard to explain, even if they were good at explaining, which they aren't. One would need long intimacy ——"

"Aren't you intimate with them yet?" demanded Mrs. Barrington.

"Remember, please, that I've been here only a few months. And there are a good many branches to the

work. I haven't had time yet to do much except with the children. And they're the most important, after all, don't you think?"

"Miss Sargle!" Mrs. Barrington had a sudden inspiration, not to be credited to any knowledge of, or any particular sympathy with, the women and children of Little Italy. Social leadership grows out of that instinct and stimulates it.

"Miss Sargle, who is the brightest Italian girl around here—not over fifteen years old?"

"Why, there are a great many bright ones. That's their characteristic, you know, to be bright. There's—let me see—of course, I've not learned all their names—there's Domenica—she's sixteen, I think—but she's bright ——"

"Too old!" said Mrs. Barrington, decisively.

"Well, then there's—let me think—there's—oh, yes—there's Carmella Kid Kate. At least, that's what they call her. I don't know her last name. I call her Carmella, but the children seem to call her Kid Kate. She's the kind you mean."

"How old is she?"

"Twelve, for a guess—or thirteen. She's that size, though she's so self-confident that she seems older."

"How near here does she live?"

"Over on Doty Street, I think. Not far, anyway."

"Get her and send her here. I'll wait."

Mrs. Barrington settled down to further reflection, the interview over and its details forgotten. Miss

Sargle was a means to an end. One does not remember such things.

"But ——" began Miss Sargle.

"I'll wait," repeated Mrs. Barrington.

Miss Sargle went out, debating in her mind. She was alone in the house, so far as management went, and could not well leave it. Yet Mrs. Barrington was not the sort of woman one denied. She began to have new respect for the sponsor of the sewing class.

On random chance, she climbed the two flights of stairs to the canopied roof playground. There was no class at that hour, but two small dark-haired girls sat in a corner, reading books from the settlement library.

"Hello, Elena! Hello, Giulia! Does either of you know where Carmella lives?"

"You mean Kid Kate?"

"Yes," said Miss Sargle.

The two girls stood, bright and well-mannered. They were members of the Girl Scout troop that Hope House fostered. Giulia spoke:

"Sure, I know, Miss Sargle. Just over on Doty Street. In the yellow cottage there—just all to themselves one house. Her dad's rich, I bet."

"What's her father's last name, Giulia?"

Both girls shook their heads.

"I never heard it, Miss Sargle," said Giulia.

"But—I mean—what is Carmella's—Kid Kate's—whole name?"

"Oh! Carmella Coletta. But she'll slap you if you

call her anything but Kid or Kate. And she slaps hard, Miss Sargle, you bet."

Giulia put her hand to her cheek, unconsciously. Elena giggled uneasily.

"Well, Giulia," said Miss Sargle. "I'll give you a dime if you'll run over to Carmella's house and see if she's there. If she is, tell her I'd like to see her. Right away, quick! There's a lady downstairs who wants to talk with her. But you just tell her Miss Sargle wants her right away."

"May I leave my library book here, Miss Sargle?"

"Yes, yes, yes! But please run! And ask Carmella to run back with you."

"By gollies, said der captain, if it ain't it a emergencies wot it is," hummed Giulia to herself as she tossed her book into a willow chair and dashed down the stairs.

Miss Sargle descended more slowly. And thought. Here was another eccentricity to be charged to Carmella. Slapping other children unless they called her Kate. Yet the girl had never objected when Miss Sargle and other workers had used her Italian name. Strange child! Strange child!

"I've sent for Carmella," she announced, looking into the room where Mrs. Barrington sat, still tense in meditation.

"Thank you!" said the lady absently.

Miss Sargle started for her office across the corridor, but turned to say:

"By the way, Mrs. Barrington, her name is Carmella—Carmella Coletta. But if she doesn't seem to want to talk, try calling her Kate. For some strange reason she likes that name."

"Thank you!" said Mrs. Barrington, gazing through the window.

And, as if uninterrupted, the sponsor of the sewing class resumed her mental analysis of the situation.

This settlement house work was out of her routine world—but were worlds so different, after all? Perhaps old rules governed new problems. She had learned much of the philosophy of social stress through long seasons of charity balls and Grace Church fêtes and country club tournaments and carefully exchanged teas and dinners. Even Junior League politics was no unknown quantity, although she herself had been a quarter-generation early for this manifestation.

But she had served a term as president of the Ashcroft Circle, which ruled in days of old, until it grew too conservative and domineering for onrushing débutantes. The sewing class—she wondered if here again was something of the same problem. It was not attracting the younger women of Little Italy. She tried to picture Carmella in advance. Her own Margaret was hardly older than this unknown Italian girl, whom she was waiting to consult ——

"Carmella"—a musically alluring name, yet one with strength in it. Curious for a girl with such a name to prefer "Kate." Yet people chose queer things

for queer reasons. Especially young people in these quick days.

Queer reasons! There must be a reason why the sewing class was failing. There always was a reason. Probably queer. But worth knowing. Where in the world was that girl? Mrs. Barrington looked at her watch, and frowned.

Down the street came Giulia, racing. Into the doorway of the stucco building, up the half-dozen steps to the main floor, and to the left into Miss Sargle's office.

"She—she—she's—c-c-coming."

"Thank you ever so much," said Miss Sargle, smiling and reaching for her purse to find the promised dime. "You're all out of breath, Giulia. Is she coming right away?"

"Y-y-yes, Miss Sa-sar-gle. S-soon as she c-can walk. She w'wouldn't run, like you said. I told her y-you said."

"Oh, very well, Giulia. It isn't far. Here's your dime, and thank you."

"Y-yes'm. Thank you! I'll use the money for fireworks. St. Theresa's Day comes next week, you know."

"So it does, Giulia. Thank you for finding Carmella."

"Yes'm."

Giulia started for the stairway to resume her book, but turned and peered into the office again.

"SHE WOULDN'T RUN, LIKE YOU SAID"

"Sh-she said, Miss Sargle, she'd be *dannato* if she'd run."

And then Giulia panted up the stairs, clutching her dime. Miss Sargle rested her chin on her hand. Strange child! Strange children!

Presently Carmella calmly arrived.

Deliberately she turned from the corridor into the superintendent's office.

"Good evening, Miss Sargle!" she said.

"How do you do, Carmella? You didn't run with Giulia, the way I asked you to."

"What's the use? It's hot. And you didn't send word the cops were pinching the place or anything. I asked Julia very special. She ran back, but she's an ignitz. You can talk English yourself, you know."

"Yes, of course. But ——"

"Well, then, you don't need any help in a hurry, if it isn't the cops. If it's anybody else, they'll wait for you. Get me?"

"I see," said Miss Sargle. Although, in her heart, she didn't. This was postgraduate work, and she had merely graduated from the social service institution. But she hastened to recapture the leadership.

"I want you to come in and talk with Mrs. Barrington, Carmella. She wants to talk with you. Come with me."

"Who's Mrs. Barrington?" demanded Carmella, spreading her feet and standing still.

"She's sponsor of the sewing class."

"Oh, I heard of that dame. M' mother knows her. Kind of high hat, ain't she?"

"I don't think so. She's very pleasant. She wants to talk with you."

Miss Sargle moved on, expecting Carmella to follow. Thus she had been trained. But Carmella stood firm.

"What's she want to talk to me about?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Perhaps about the sewing class."

"I don't know a blame thing about it, except that she's high hat. Why don't she ask Mrs. Scalzo?"

Miss Sargle started in surprise. The girl's uncanny wisdom of things was—Miss Sargle searched her mind for the word—well, it was uncanny.

"I don't know, Carmella. Come this way, please."

"Oh, all right!"

And so Carmella Coletta met Mrs. Rodney Barrington.

CARMELLA CALMLY ARRIVED

Chapter Two

IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION

"HOW do you do, Carmella?" said Mrs. Barrington, appraising the sturdy little black-haired picture of self-confidence at a glance, quite as she had appraised social leaders through recent years. Or so she thought. She might learn later that her trained inventory had overlooked some few factors that were outside her own reactions.

"I'm very well, thank you, Mrs. Barrington," answered Carmella quietly. "How do *you* do, Mrs. Barrington?"

A deep reader of racial riddles would try to interpret deeply the slight—the very slight emphasis on Carmella's "you" as she asked after Mrs. Barrington's health. But the deep reader would be wrong. It was not even symbolic, save as the child herself symbolized a swift decade dieted in a faster school of life than Mrs. Barrington's forty-one years could match.

Carmella, to put it simply, was merely trying to be polite—which to her meant returning whatever seemed to her to be tit for whatever seemed to her to be tat. It is an old, old rule.

Mrs. Barrington had been—well, perhaps she had been a trifle overgracious in her question. Carmella, by instinct as fundamental as the first step in civilization, was perhaps a trifle overcasual in reply.

Mrs. Barrington, as it happened, did not notice the very slight emphasis.

"Very well, thank you, Carmella," she said.

"That's good," said Carmella, still struggling with her social formulas. "It's been a beautiful day, hasn't it?"

"Ye-e-es!" admitted Mrs. Barrington, beginning to be more observant. "A very beautiful day," she added, after a pause that may have denoted a revised mental measurement.

And then, for a moment, Mrs. Barrington and Miss Carmella Coletta forgot the rules. They simply stood and stared.

Mrs. Barrington, daughter of all the daughters of all the necessary ancestors in American history.

Carmella Coletta, daughter of an immigrant who at that moment could not talk English, and was swearing at a shoveler in rich Italian. Yet, perhaps, descendant of kings who ruled when Nero was merely a maternal hope. Yet, also perhaps, not.

The difference was chiefly that Mrs. Barrington knew and cared, whereas Carmella did not know and did not care. She would not even have known what to care about had she been told to sit still for five minutes and worry.

Mrs. Barrington smiled graciously at well-regulated intervals. Sometimes a fraction too graciously, but her own world rarely measured half-tones. Carmella smiled easily and contagiously. Often her eyes smiled when her lips did not—a puzzling sort of smile that lures confidence but repels familiarity.

Two strong souls looked through each other's front windows for a moment. Neither could turn a corner in the other's house. But at least they saw past the entrance.

Carmella had never heard of Kipling, and Mrs. Barrington had long since forgotten him as of no immediate conversational value. The two lived perhaps four miles from each other, across the city. But there was neither East nor West, though they came from the ends of the earth.

"Carmella," began Mrs. Barrington, recovering first from the mutual study ——

"Mrs. Barrington," Carmella interrupted, "please call me Kate."

"Why—why—ye-es—of course. But isn't your name Carmella?"

"Sure it is—my dago name. But it's wop—wop—wop. So help me *Santo Dio*, Mrs. Barrington, I get so damn' sick ——"

"Carmella, you're swearing!"

"Yes'm! I'm trying to. I get so damn' sick of this wop stuff. You can't imagine! My name, when I get to be an American, is going to be Catherine. But

of course I'm a kid, so it has to be Kate. So, if you don't mind ——"

"Kid Kate!" murmured Mrs. Barrington, thinking aloud.

"Yes'm! Kid Kate. Anything but that Carmella stuff. I get that at home."

"But Carmella is a beautiful name," suggested Mrs. Barrington.

The girl stood squarely gazing, but did not answer.

"And you never told Miss Sargle to call you Kate, did you, Carmella?"

"Oh—her! *Buon Dio*, no!"

"But why not?"

"*Perchè?* Because she'd ask me why and argue me, and ask m' mother why, and write down a figure in a book. She's all rules. She's dumb. She wouldn't know—the way you do, Mrs. Barrington."

"I see."

Mrs. Barrington was silent for a moment. Waiting to be sure that she wholly did see. Waiting to value Carmella's verdict on her own possible virtues. Then, suddenly, she came to the reason for the interview.

"Let's sit down, Kate. I want to ask you a question. You know we have a sewing class here at Hope House. Your mother, they tell me, makes beautiful lace. But she doesn't come any more."

"What of it?" demanded Carmella. "Lots of other girls' mothers don't."

"MRS. BARRINGTON, PLEASE CALL ME KATE"

"That's true. But I want to find out why. Why doesn't your mother come, Kate?"

"Is there a law that she has to?"

"Of course not! But I should think she'd like to."

"That's the bunk!" said Carmella. "She don't have to. She don't like to. Why should she?"

"But why doesn't she want to, Kate?"

"She speaks not the English."

"But—we have some one here who speaks Italian. Mrs. Scalzo would talk to her. And most of the other women talk Italian more than they do English."

"Yes," admitted Carmella.

"Then why doesn't she want to, Kate?"

Carmella wriggled with eagerness to tell. The eagerness of youth possessed of knowledge for which an adult is seeking. But a reticence the native rarely fathoms held her back—the reticence of caution in a strange world. She sat and stared, totally silent.

Suddenly Mrs. Barrington laughed. The altogether happy laugh of one who has solved a secret.

"Carmella Kid Kate!" she exclaimed. "You're afraid of me. You're afraid to tell. You're afraid of me, and I'm just Mrs. Barrington."

"Afraid nothing!" exclaimed Carmella, as instinctively as she would have met a taunt in the schoolyard at recess. "You think I'm afraid of you? Sure you're Mrs. Barrington. And what's that? I'm Carmella Coletta, and I'm private secretary of the Coletta

——" she hesitated for the word—"the Coletta Construction Company. Afraid!"

"What do you construct, Kate?"

"Cellars," answered the girl defiantly.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Mrs. Barrington. "You, or your father?"

Carmella laughed in turn—quite the equal of Mrs. Barrington's—plus the added sincerity of thirteen years as compared with forty-one.

"Dad, of course! Dad's the Construction part of it. He's a whiz at that. Any time you want any cellars built, ask dad. But I'm the Company of it. When it comes to talking or writing, dad's a dud. That's where I come in. I'm the goods when it comes to the English part."

"So I judged," said Mrs. Barrington, smiling.

Her social instinct, synchronized to situations, told her that this was the moment. She went on quickly.

"But tell me, Kate, now that you trust me, why doesn't your mother come to the sewing class?"

"Mother, or all the other women?"

Mrs. Barrington flushed slightly. Carmella's perceptions were disconcerting.

"Your mother and other women," she admitted.

Carmella gazed long and keenly at Mrs. Barrington, so long and so keenly that the latter was again almost embarrassed. Finally the girl spoke:

"You really want to know?"

"I really do, Kate."

"Even if it hurts your feelings?"

"Even if it hurts my feelings."

"Then I'll tell you. You're high hat with them."

At this particular moment Miss Sargle had to step to the door. It was Miss Sargle's misfortune that she always interrupted at the wrong moment. Like the habit of attempting dramatic entrances, only to stumble over the rug. There is no getting over it.

"Carmella's brother is here for her," said Miss Sargle.

Without waiting for further introduction, the girl's ten-year-old brother darted into the room.

"Quick, kid!" he cried, speaking in Italian for greater privacy from these American women. "Mother wants you to come home right away, to speak English. She's mad at you for coming over without asking."

"Cops?" asked Carmella.

"No, no! A man asking questions. Mother wants you."

"All right. You run and tell her I'll be right over. Run like the devil, or we'll both catch it. Tell her I'll be right over."

"You'll catch it anyway," retorted Joe. "She's mad."

As her brother started away, Carmella turned to Mrs. Barrington and explained, in English:

"Mother wants me, to talk English for her. She gets panicky when I ain't around and anybody comes.

Damn these languages anyway! Why don't they all talk Italian? Good-bye, Mrs. Barrington."

"But, Kate, just a minute!"

Mrs. Barrington was definitely annoyed at the interruption, just as the key to the problem was being given her. In her own well-ordered home interruptions did not happen. She felt like discharging Miss Sargle on the spot, with two weeks' pay and no reference.

"What do you mean about my being high hat with your mother?" she went on quickly.

Carmella turned in the doorway, emerging from the middle of Miss Sargle, into whom she had plunged in the process of hasty departure. Miss Sargle had lingered fascinated. She was far less bewildered by the collision than by discovering a Carmella who talked freely and scandalously with Mrs. Barrington. With herself, Carmella had invariably been reserved and most exemplary. Here, she sensed, was another step in her postgraduate education.

Poised on one foot, Carmella turned to Mrs. Barrington and half shouted:

"You know what high hat is, don't you? You think you're better than us folks. Better than m' mother. You talk down to 'em. You smile down to 'em. My mother ain't going to make lace for you to smile down to her about. It's better lace than you could make yourself. A whole heap better. Get me?"

"But, Kate ——" pleaded Mrs. Barrington, now in real distress. She knew that never again could she

get Carmella into this mood of high and heart-rending frankness.

"I answered your question, and I gotta go, and go quick. I gotta go. Good-bye, Mrs. Barrington!"

The interview's final touch of courtesy was Carmella's, descendant possibly of ancient kings; descendant surely of a civilization that was older than that of Hope House. Miss Sargle breathed heavily and hurried to her own office before Mrs. Barrington could speak.

Carmella, as she fled, was appalled at her own boldness. She ran from what had happened as well as to answer her mother's summons. Her sturdy legs bore her swiftly down the street as Mrs. Barrington looked through the window after her. Much more swiftly than she had come Carmella was going.

Mrs. Barrington sat down to think over an entirely new notion.

"High hat," indeed!

And what exactly, she wondered to herself, was high hat? She had heard her own Margaret use the phrase, too. Evidently it was something that ran through all the social layers. And it might be an idea worth considering.

Was it by any chance that settlement work was handicapped by this high hatting? Her thought turned again to the Ashcroft Circle. Was it the same instinct that had caused the newcoming juniors to

form their League and defy the established order? Was the world such a medley of monotonous motives?

But there were so many ways of "smiling down," as Carmella had called it. How, in particular, had she offended Carmella's mother? Or the other women who no longer came to the sewing class?

She hadn't done it! She knew she hadn't. Her work was as altruistic as, for example, her friendship for Mrs. Whitman Russell, wife of the president of the Central Trust Company, on whose invitation she was here in Hope House.

And yet—Carmella had been positive. A most positive youngster! With remarkable eyes and a remarkable smile. And—bless Mrs. Barrington's highly pedigreed soul for admitting it—Carmella had spoken as one having authority.

How much authority of knowledge had she? Mrs. Barrington wondered. Her wondering continued as she left Hope House and entered her waiting car to be driven from the old east end slowly through the business district to the newer west side.

"Dixon," she suddenly asked of the chauffeur, "did anybody ever 'smile down' at you?"

"I beg pardon, ma'am?" said Dixon.

Mrs. Barrington repeated the question, whereupon Dixon drove in silence for some moments, pondering. At last he answered.

"If I know what you mean, ma'am, yes!"

"Who?"

"Well, ma'am, for one there was that Italian girl that came racing out of the house a few minutes before you came out. She did it, I reckon."

"Who? Kid Kate? I don't mean that sort of thing. She's a child. And besides, she doesn't know you. I mean somebody who smiles down—you know —from above."

"Mostly the people who tip you do that, Mrs. Barrington," said Dixon.

"Oh, I see! And do you like it, Dixon?"

"If they tip big enough, I can stand it, as long as I'm driving. But when I get through ——"

"You mean you're not going to be a chauffeur always?"

"Not always, ma'am. Of course not."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Get into a job that grows, ma'am."

"I see. And then?"

"Nobody's going to tip me, ma'am. I'll charge 'em and they'll pay. And if they act superior, I'm going to tell 'em to go to hell. I beg pardon, Mrs. Barrington. That slipped out."

"All right! That's all right, Dixon. I see what you mean."

It was Mrs. Barrington's first attempt to learn from her chauffeur. She sat in silence, trying to figure how much she had learned. Suddenly she remembered, with a hot-flushing face, that Mrs. Whitman Russell had "smiled down" to her—on her, Mrs. Barrington

—when the subject of sponsoring the sewing class had first been mentioned.

"The cat!" exclaimed Mrs. Barrington to herself. And sank into a corner of the sedan to think and to grow furious.

Chapter Three

A BADGE IS OFFICIAL

CARMELLA, meanwhile, had come running to the yellow cottage on Doty Street, a dingy cottage with a ten-foot depth of front yard and room for grapes at the back. In marked contrast to the square-front tenements on both sides and across the street. Carmella reveled in the feeling of glorious superiority a one-family house gave her.

Before she had turned the corner she had known what to prepare for. A strange man in a gray suit, with baggy trousers, with some kind of a book in one hand and a pencil in the other, and her mother shrieking maledictions which the gray-clad man would not understand, because they were in Italian. It was exactly so.

The gray-clad young man, speaking English; Maria Coletta, Carmella's mother, highly angry and shouting Italian. With neighbors and neighbors' children gathered around the yellow gate. When Carmella arrived the argument had reached high-C. She rushed to her mother's side and faced the stranger.

"Say," she cried in English, "cut the comedy and

come down to cases with me. What in hell do you want with m' mother?"

Mrs. Coletta glanced proudly at the assembled neighbors. Perhaps she was helpless in the face of English speech, but she had a daughter! And such a daughter!

"Who the hell are you, kid?" demanded the stranger, taken by surprise.

"I'm the talking member of this firm, Mr. Smarty," said Carmella. "I pay the taxes and the graft and I know Tim O'Neil, the big cop down at headquarters. That's me! Now who are you and what do you want?"

"Well, you're some kid, all right," exclaimed the stranger. "Now look here, kid ——"

"Miss Coletta is my name," said Carmella.

"Yeh! Miss Coletta. All I'm doing is to collect poll tax figures. Who's your dad?"

"Who's your old man?" asked Carmella.

"Cut that out!" said the canvasser. "I'm official. Now who's the men folks around this house?"

"Are you a cop?" asked Carmella.

She had heard of plain clothes men.

"Nothing like it," said the stranger.

"Then show me a badge. If you're official, you gotta badge."

Mr. Stephens, college sophomore, pulled open his coat and showed a nickel badge.

Carmella inspected it carefully.

"That's all right!" she said. "Now what do you want to know?"

"How many folks are there in this family over twenty-one?" said Mr. Stephens.

"Not a one only dad," said Carmella. "And mother," she added.

Mr. Stephens, laboriously working his way through college, thereupon took from Carmella the necessary facts concerning Tommaso Coletta, contractor, and his wife, Maria, Mrs. Coletta glaring heavily the while.

As the young man went out through the yellow gate she turned to Carmella, saying in Italian, her only language:

"Why were you over to the House, you runaway?"

"They sent for me."

"What for?"

"To ask questions."

"What questions?"

"Oh, just questions."

"How often have I told you not to go over to the House without you ask?"

"Aw, mother, forget it!"

"Forget it, shall I? Forget it? Listen, girl! You mind me or you get hurt. Come with me!"

She laid a heavy hand on Carmella's arm, starting for the door.

"You lick me again and I forget English!" screamed Carmella.

This was a new threat she had lately evolved, and it frightened her mother.

"Oh-ho! You forget English, do you? Then I bet your father he make you remember. I tell him when he comes home."

"Oh, *cara madre*, don't tell dad. He hits to hurt."

"Ah-ha! Maybe you like it not that I tell him. Then what about it that you forget English?"

"Gee, mother! I'll remember."

"I'll bet you do," said Mrs. Coletta.

Mother and daughter went into the yellow cottage together—two generations a thousand years apart.

Tommaso was late in his home-coming that night, and Carmella studied his mood closely. There was still a question in her mind whether her mother would tell him that she had disobeyed. He had a way of questioning that seemed to command Maria to tell him everything.

Carmella was afraid of him—and he was the only individual in the world of whom she was afraid. It would not have been good for her, at thirteen, to know that he also was afraid of her; that he was afraid of all his English-chattering children. But chiefly afraid of Carmella, she being the oldest and the one on whom both parents relied to interpret their wishes to a world that did not speak their language.

Carmella spoke three separate tongues. In school she used a stilted, formal English, often putting "dis" for "this," but closely following the textbooks in style.

At home she spoke Italian to her parents, and a pidgin-mixture with her younger brothers and sisters. Elsewhere she spoke a haphazard jumble of the two, American slang preferred, as with Mrs. Barrington—a very unbookish jargon.

She knew that her command of the speech of the country gave her an advantage over her mother. In a vague way she felt that it did over her father. But Tommaso Coletta was not so easily bluffed as was his wife. He mingled more with men and affairs. Once Carmella had threatened him by saying that she would forget English. And he had responded by punishing her with a severity that was unusual even for him.

It would have amazed them both to know that his daily questioning of his wife about the children's behavior, and the severity of his whippings when they had misbehaved, were reactions of his unformulated fear—his fear of children who dwelt in another language—the fear of the hen which has hatched duck's eggs and sees her offspring swimming.

Carmella had watched her father come down the street and turn into the yard. He was tired—she could tell by his walk. A bullet wound he had received at the Piave never troubled him except when he was tired. Then it gave him a slight limp. He had come to America only after he had served his country in the war. Carmella and Giuseppe were only babies then. There had been three others since.

"*Buona sera, papa carissimo!*" she cried at the door.

The warmth of her greeting pleased him more than he would or could have told. Carmella was not usually demonstrative in affection.

"Hello, *piccola ragazza!*" he said, catching her in his arms. "I hope you have behaved well today, *ragazzina.*"

"But, *padre,*" protested Carmella, "you shouldn't call me *ragazzina.* I'm too big for that."

"Too big for what, *innesta?*" he retorted, laughing.

Carmella did not mind being called an imp when Tommaso was in good humor. It was an unusual word for him. Before she could reply, he was calling to his wife.

"Hello, *Maria cara!* Have all the little ones behaved today?"

Carmella shot a glowering glance at her mother.

"Pretty well," said the latter, after an instant's hesitation.

"That's good! That's good! I'm tired, and don't want to have to punish anybody."

He went to the kitchen, washed, then returned to the living room and sat down in the Morris chair that he had insisted on adding to the installment house's complete outfit for six rooms. Tommaso especially liked two things about America. He had never seen a Morris chair before, and he found it good. Also he liked the money it was possible to earn here.

"Carmella," he said, "I wish to talk with you."

"*Si, padre! E lanciari!*"

Tommaso frowned. It was a phrase like this, which though slang in America, was nothing at all when translated literally into his own Neapolitan, that caused him worry. "Shoot it!" What did the girl mean? Yet that was what she had said.

In tiny ways like this Carmella had become a continual torment.

But Tommaso had heard talk from others about daughters. Even about American daughters. He had heard that they worried their parents as well.

What should worry them he could not entirely gather. *Per la Madonna!* They at least spoke the same language as their daughters. If only he could be as glib of speech as Carmella! Then he would know, and he could be a father to her, and she should grow up to be a fine young woman, and marry well, and ——

He meant that she should do so, anyway. But it was hard, hard, hard. It brought wrinkles between his eyes. Trying to found a business and to bring up a family, both in an unknown tongue. And heavens, how he loved the girl! He had loved Maria, his wife. Yes, he still loved her. But Carmella—ah! There was a girl for you! If only she didn't forever slip out of his world into a foreign world of speech.

"Listen to me, Carmella," he said. And as he spoke he took out a stained brown leather billfold and counted out ten one-dollar bills.

"Listen, Carmella! Here is ten dollars. It is for

the payment on the victrola—the last payment. You pay it tomorrow. Then we own it. How's that, Carmella? We own it! It is ours! Do you like that?"

"Sure!" said Carmella. "And then we can get a radio?"

"Radio *all' inferno!*" exclaimed Tommaso. "It be *damn!*" he went on, relapsing into such American idiom as he knew, exactly as his English-speaking children, when angry, relapsed into Italian profanity. "Does radio speak Italian, I ask you? Does it sound to me in my own speech? No! Then we do not have radio."

"All right, all right, dad! Everybody else does. That's all. I don't care so much about it myself. Too much jazz! And anyway, I can listen over at Nick's."

"Over where?" Tommaso was at once alert. "Nicolo Pieri?"

"Sure, dad! Across the street. He's a lively kid. And his radio is the best on Doty Street. Five tubes. Gee, it's a wonder!"

"So that is another thing for me to talk to you about. One is pay for the victrola tomorrow. It is the day."

"I'll do it, dad."

"And make him give you the paper which says it is all mine, and not part his."

"Yes, dad!"

"That is one thing. Then this Nicolo Pieri. He is not so good a boy. I hear it talked. The *polizia*,

they know him. He does nothing yet, but they watch. I do not like that you should like him."

"Oh, sul-lush!"

"What is it you say, Carmella *mia?* 'Sul-lush!' "

"I mean, dad, that Nick is all right. He's a good kid. Just lively, that's all. And since his dad got killed last year his mother is trying to hold him too tight. Nick likes a good time. He built his own radio, you know. And he's the boy Mr. Carroll, the principal down to the school, got to do everything for him last year."

"Does this Mr. Carroll know boys?"

"*Santo Dio!* He ought to. He gets four thousand a year for pretending to, anyway. And I guess that's that."

These phrases of American, spoken in Italian, perplexed Tommaso. They said so much and meant so little. When he was a boy, in the outskirts of Naples —ah, children didn't talk to their parents like that. He decided to pass on to his final theme.

"Is there school tomorrow, Carmella?"

"Sure not! It's Saturday, isn't it?"

"I thought so. Then I wish you to talk for me, out at our land in Greendale."

"*Santo fumo!*" exclaimed Carmella, and her father frowned.

Here again was that trick of speech which Carmella had unconsciously formed, turning an American bit of slang or expletive into literal Italian, where it

meant nothing at all. She had thought to say "Holy smoke!" but the literal translation did not correspond in idea. Tommaso was growing impatient with senseless exclamations.

"What is it that you say?" he demanded.

"*Mio Dio!* So I meant, father. But land in Greendale. Us?"

"*Si!*"

"What are you doing with land in Greendale, dad?"

"It is good land. They want to buy it. We have two lots, side by side, which they would buy."

"How much are they worth?"

"I shall talk, and you shall only translate," said Tommaso ponderously.

"Oh, all right! But do we get motored out, or do we have to take the street car?"

"They bring an auto here at ten o'clock. We go that way. Before that you shall go downtown and pay for the victrola."

"I'll do that, father. I'm glad we're going to motor. And no flivver, I hope."

She slid from the arm of the Morris chair, content with the interview. She was glad of the day, for it had brought her much knowledge.

It had taught her that Mrs. Barrington, whose husband owned real estate, could be worried by trifling matters. It had taught her that her own father also owned land. Not as much as Mr. Barrington, of

course. But enough to permit thinking of the two men in the same thought.

She was glad that she had talked straight truths to Mrs. Barrington, as to an equal.

She had, moreover, scored strategically at her father's home-coming. Enough, at least, to avoid that heavy-handed punishment which both Tommaso and Maria had been brought up to believe was a growing family's salvation.

Although she would have liked it better to be called on to accompany her father on a day when it would have kept her out of school, she felt that the evening had been altogether successful.

Chapter Four

IN TERMS OF DOLLARS

MARIA called the family to supper, all but baby Enrico, who had been put to bed. Tommaso and his wife rarely talked at meals. Tonight Carmella also was silent, as she reflected on the glories of being a landowner's daughter. The other children chattered among themselves in whatever language suited them.

Tommaso drank more of Maria's good grape wine than usual, but otherwise showed no sign of mental unrest. Suddenly Carmella turned to him and asked:

"Who are the men tomorrow, dad? Who wants to buy your land?"

"Men that I have met," he answered shortly. Then, turning to Maria, he explained:

"Mr. Hastings and Mr. Richmond, she means. These two want to buy land on which I have an option. Carmella goes with me tomorrow to talk to them."

"An option you have? Is that land?" asked Maria.

Not often was she thus taken into her lord and master's confidence, and she was elated.

"An option it is a chance to buy. I have made one

down-payment, for the option. Either tomorrow I must pay once more, or sell. Maybe I shall sell."

To Mrs. Coletta this was so much bewilderment. But she smiled and nodded and poured another glass of wine for Tommaso. For was it not right that a wife should smile and nod and pour wine if her husband deigned to tell her anything of his affairs?

But to Carmella it was specific information. In his confusion over having children who talked what he could not talk, yet who talked with him in his own blessed Neapolitan, he often forgot that when he spoke with Maria they could understand. Carmella best of all, of course, for she was knowing of everything. A wonderful girl, his Carmella!

Giuseppe, too, was able to follow almost any speech. Raffaela and Paola, who were native-born Americans, were a little more difficult to understand, for they seemed to speak the language of the land more naturally than they did his own tongue.

Truly it was comforting to pocket the dollars this America produced, and to feel himself a part of its quick-moving ways by dealing in real estate that others already wanted. But after supper, as he smoked his pipe in the Morris chair, he dreamed dreams of a little home outside of Naples, where his wife sitting beside him and children playing around him should have only one common experience, one common language.

It was perplexing. The dream, he knew, could never become real.

Maria laughed next morning to see Carmella bound out of bed without being called, and called again, and shaken. That was the routine of the girl's rising. But now she was dressed almost as early as her mother. And helped to get breakfast, a thing she also rarely did without being scolded into it.

Maria watched her deft handling of dishes and food. Particularly when she ground the coffee was her mother amazed. So far as she knew never yet had Carmella ground the coffee. Freshly-ground coffee was one of Tommaso's breakfast whims. He would have it. He had got the idea from some American acquaintance, had brought home a coffee grinder and taught his wife to use it.

Every morning she ground it fresh for him, complaining that he should be so notional, and secretly proud that he should be.

Carmella had never before shown interest in the making of a breakfast. Yet here was she now catering to her father's newest whim. To Maria it was as if she suddenly had a new daughter. Her thoughts ran on:

"Surely, after all, the child will be a good wife for some good man. If only she chooses a good man! It seems there are so many who are not good in this new land. If only she would like to wash dishes now, where could one find a better daughter?"

It was true that Carmella never washed dishes except under strict compulsion. This morning, the instant breakfast was finished, she dashed from the house on an errand her mother did not know. But, her father being there and not interfering, what was there for a mother to say?

A few minutes before ten Carmella was back and handed a receipt to Tommaso.

"It is ours! It is ours! It is ours!" she shouted, dashing to the victrola and inserting a record. The strains of "Catch 'Em and Kill 'Em Politely" were unwinding themselves from the disk as a knock on the front door announced visitors. Carmella was there.

"Yes!" she said in response to the caller's question. "This is Mr. Coletta's house. He'll be right out. Just a minute!"

In her excitement she slammed the door in the visitor's face, and shouted for Tommaso. The latter, looking through the window, saw Mr. Richmond sitting in the machine and Mr. Hastings, meditatively rubbing his nose, on the sidewalk. Carmella was already dancing to the door with her hat on.

"You tell me what they say; you tell them what I say; that is all," commanded Tommaso as they walked toward the yellow gate.

"Yes, dad. But first you tell them who I am," said Carmella.

"*Buon giorno!*" said Tommaso, as they reached the machine. Pointing to Carmella, he tried to introduce

her in English. "Thees keed," he began, and gave up the effort. In his own language he said:

"My little girl, she will do the speaking for me. I will do the talking."

"Morning!" said Carmella. "Dad says I'll interpret for him while he does the heavy stuff. All right with you?"

Both men bowed gravely.

"All right with us, Miss ——"

"Kate," said Carmella suddenly.

"Miss Kate," added Mr. Hastings, who proved to be the talking member of the pair.

Carmella climbed into the rear seat with her father. The fact that it was a Packard instead of a flivver had already made her forenoon complete.

With little talk the three men and the girl rolled easily through the suburbs into the region of open spaces and occasional bungalows. Presently Mr. Richmond, at the wheel, steered off the cement to the right and brought the car to a stop.

"This the place, Mr. Coletta?" he asked.

Curiously enough, it was the first time Carmella had ever heard her father called Mr. Coletta to his face. The neighbors called him Tommaso or Tom. She glanced at him with new respect, waiting for something to translate.

But instead of speaking, he nodded and pointed to the open field across the road. The four got out. Tommaso then pointed again and said:

"That is mine."

"That's his land," said Carmella in English.

Silently the four crossed the cement highway, completed and open for traffic within the week.

"You have a quarter acre?" asked Mr. Hastings.

Carmella repeated to Tommaso, and translated his reply.

"Two lots. Eighty by one hundred."

Mr. Hastings began to chuckle.

"But you said four thousand for it," he said.

Tommaso looked at Carmella, who repeated in Italian.

"*Si!*" he said, nodding gravely.

" 'Si' means 'Yes,' " said Carmella, solemnly.

"But," said Mr. Hastings, "we can buy better land a mile beyond for half that."

Carmella translated.

"Do so, then," said Tommaso.

"What'd he say?" demanded both men, turning to Carmella in their eagerness.

"He said it was a grand little old idea of yours and to skip to it," said she.

"Oh!"

For a moment the two men consulted, walking slowly away. Carmella heard them use the name Barrington, and listened eagerly.

"He said get it, up to twice its value," she heard Mr. Richmond say. "It's his funeral. He overlooked this plot. And he's sure got to have it before he can

sell lots on a restricted basis. Or else he's got to change his location completely."

Carmella turned to her father, her mind racing madly through this new idea. She did not understand all the implications of a "restricted basis," but she realized that for some reason her father's lots were in a key position.

"Listen, dad!" she exclaimed. "Don't sell. You deal with Mr. Barrington, the big real estate man. It is he who really wants your lots."

"How do you know?" asked Tommaso.

"I heard them talking. He is the big man in land downtown. This he owns around here, too. And I know his wife."

Tommaso hesitated. So often Carmella actually did know more than he. And he had never caught her in a flagrant lie. But this! This was a bigger matter. *Evidente*, in such an affair as this, he must decide.

"I brought you here to interpret," he said. "That is all. When it is to decide, I will do it. What do they say?"

The two men walked back to Carmella.

"Tell your father," said Mr. Hastings, "that we know he is holding us up. But tell him we will stand for it. We will pay the four thousand."

Carmella turned to her father, half-choking with quick determination. If her father would not win a sure-thing gamble, then she, Kid Kate, would win it for him.

"They say,"—and this is what Carmella told Tommaso—"that four thousand dollars is too much. They will give you three thousand five hundred. It is not enough, *padre mio*. Tell them five thousand."

"But why should I say five if four is too much? I will stick to four. Tell them again my price. They pay it or I do not sell."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Hastings.

"My dad says you make him sick. You wait and talk instead of say what you will do. While you talk over there, his price goes up. His price it is now five thousand. And if you talk more, it is six thousand."

The two men glanced at each other, and Mr. Richmond's eye seemed to droop in a code that his companion seemed to understand. Carmella, instinctively decoding the droop, had new courage.

"Listen, Miss Kate," said Mr. Hastings. "Tell your father that he can't rob us. We'll offer him five thousand and that's final."

Carmella turned to her father and talked volubly. She explained that the two were trying to rob him, and that they offered only four thousand, although she had heard them say the land was worth twice that.

Tommaso spoke fervently. He declared that anyone who tried to rob him should be put in jail, and could do no business with him till time should be no more. Carmella turned to the two men:

"My dad he say six thousand now, and you pay his

price now or you do not buy. You pay his price or go to hell."

"Listen, kid," said Mr. Richmond, taking a roll of bills from his pocket. "You tell your dad five thousand flat. That's the limit. But here's a hundred extra dollars, for you yourself, to spend as you like, to bind the bargain."

He counted out ten tens. Long experience in bargaining had taught him the value of money in sight. Carmella waved her hand, and spoke quickly to Tommaso.

"Now he tries to bribe me to get you to accept his price. Do you see? They want your land because Mr. Barrington must have it for his plans. That's the only reason they want it. Tell them you will sell to him yourself or not at all."

Tommaso grew angry at the situation. These two Americans trying to beat him down! And the more angry he grew, the faster he talked. Which suited Carmella well.

"And tell them," he added, at the end of a long harangue, "that they can pay my price of four thousand or they can *vai al diavolo*."

Carmella turned calmly to the two men, though her heart was beating wildly. This was the first time she had ever deceived her father. And it was a gamble beyond her years. But—she had seen Mrs. Barrington, and seen strength turn to weakness. She had

learned that the highest are human. The thought gave her courage.

"My dad says you try to rob him. He would rather rob you. And so, he will rob. He will sell for seven thousand, or he will not sell. And Mr. Barrington, he can move down the road a mile and begin all over. Do you wish to buy at seven thousand?"

"Not by a damn sight!" exclaimed Mr. Hastings.

"Very good," said Carmella. "Then take us home."

Mr. Hastings demurred at this, but Mr. Richmond overruled.

"We brought 'em out," he said. "We're bound to see 'em back."

"Damn dagoes!" said Mr. Hastings.

In grim silence the four drove back to Doty Street.

Carmella was silent because her conscience troubled her. Never before had she consciously deceived her father. And, without his knowledge, she had gambled for him, lying to do it.

But she knew Mrs. Barrington. And Mrs. Barrington was human. No doubt Mr. Barrington was, too.

Even Carmella realized the wonderful difference which a personal acquaintance made in one's point of view. She knew that lots in Greendale were worth more today than they were worth yesterday. And that they would be worth more tomorrow.

She would have felt still easier had she known how the cement road had come to be built, and of the bus line projected past her father's land.

Chapter Five

A SOCIAL INVITATION

CARMELLA had never taken school seriously. She was in the seventh grade, as befitted her age when considered in the light of her home opportunities. But many children in the room were older. A few, with Anglo-Saxon names, were younger. Carmella was the youngest of Italian birth or parentage.

The language held them back. In the rear seats were boys and girls of fourteen or fifteen, even one of sixteen, whose parents were planning to take her out and let her work in a factory after school closed. Some, like the sixteen-year-old girl, were dull. Some were unable to speak easily in English.

Carmella sat well forward. There were two reasons for this. One was her size. She was not tall for her age, but rather short and stocky. And Miss Kelly, the teacher, found it well to have Carmella easily in view. Whenever mischief was afoot, she had learned that Carmella was better kept in sight. The girl herself was rarely caught, but when the entire room began to grow turbulent and Carmella's black eyes were snapping and laughing, though her face was solemn as at

church, Miss Kelly's instinct was to connect the two. Once she yielded to her impulse.

"Carmella, come here!" she commanded, at a moment when Carmella seemed the only well-behaved child in the room.

The surprised Carmella went forward.

"Go and stand in the corner!" said Miss Kelly.

"But, Miss Kelly ——" began the victim of discipline.

"Go and stand in the corner!" repeated Miss Kelly firmly.

Carmella obeyed, and the sudden peace that brooded over the entire forty children confirmed Miss Kelly's instinct.

The school was overwhelmingly Italian. Most of the children, like Carmella, talked one or another dialect of Italian in their homes. In the school itself Italian was forbidden. They even played their games at recess in English, except when some one hit some one else and was sworn at in Italian.

Mr. Carroll, the principal, sensed the need for stressing English in his classrooms, and definitely ignored the supposedly well-balanced curriculum laid down by the school board and superintendent. In consequence, his school stood lowest in the uniform examinations. But he was content, knowing that his first duty to his charges lay in seeing that they talked the language of their country.

"And," he told the superintendent, when this prob-

lem had been in debate between them, "think of having a President of the United States who talked with a foreign twang, just because I didn't make the teachers drill them in English, over and over."

The superintendent had smiled, and Mr. Carroll's methods were not questioned further. Occasionally the parents of Anglo-Saxon origin complained, but for political reasons their complaints never reached far, and now and then some such child was quietly transferred to another school, if the complaints were vigorous enough.

Carmella would have reveled in the English lessons of her schoolday, except that the bigger children in the rear seats kept the business of learning in too elementary a stage. She was forever asking Miss Kelly questions about words and sentences. But the other studies found her uninterested and careless.

Just now, in geography, they were studying South America. Carmella recited the highly important characteristics of Ecuador without enthusiasm. Mostly she had them wrong. She was more interested in arranging a pin so that it would stick into Salvatore, the boy in front, when he sat back, than in the whole vast problem of the future welfare of Ecuador.

But this morning, the day after the real estate negotiations in Greendale, Carmella suddenly turned herself with almost a ferocity of interest toward another study—arithmetic. Early in the forenoon she raised her hand, waving it madly until Miss Kelly responded.

"Miss Kelly," said Carmella, standing by her desk while the other children wondered what new mischief was coming, "Miss Kelly, will you please say to us what is the most important study we study?"

Surprised, Miss Kelly nevertheless answered promptly:

"English. Language is the pathway to all the things we are interested in, you know."

"Yes, Miss Kelly. And what is the next best study, please?"

This time Miss Kelly thought longer. Finally, she replied:

"It is hard to tell that, Carmella. Perhaps it is civics. Perhaps it is arithmetic. Yes, I believe the next most important study is arithmetic."

Carmella smiled happily.

"That is what I hoped you would say, Miss Kelly. Please, could we study more arithmetic and less Ecuador?"

"We must study what is good for us, Carmella," said Miss Kelly. "And so we must study geography and other things as well as arithmetic and English."

But to herself the puzzled teacher was wondering why in the world these children of alien parents, whose problem of problems it was to know their city and state and country, to know American ways and American ideals, should be expected to learn why and wherein Ecuador differed from Peru or Chile. English first, of course. And arithmetic was necessary and

international. Unconsciously that day she cut short the South American lesson to turn to the rules of percentage. And she noted with interest that Carmella devoted herself to figures as never before.

"Somebody's cheated her out of a dime," thought Miss Kelly, little dreaming that Carmella was dreaming in terms of thousands of dollars.

What the girl was, in fact, dreaming at the time was less dream than nightmare. Her father had set four thousand dollars as his price. She had heard the Americans say that Mr. Barrington would pay up to double the value. Yet they had offered nothing like twice Tommaso's figure.

Her opinion, after an afternoon and night of feverish worry, was that they had been commissioned to buy up to a certain sum, and were trying to pay less in order to pocket the difference. This theory presupposed that her father had named a price in fair proportion to value. She believed that Tommaso would do that.

And yet ——

It swept over her in sudden tremors that he might have added all the possible profit for himself, before setting his figure. In which case all her dreams of sudden prosperity were void, and life held nothing but horror for her. Yet always, after a trembling spell, her thoughts came back to the secure belief that her father was not American enough for that.

If he had said four thousand, believing that the

property was worth it, then she believed that her position would yet be secure. If not ——

Then she could run away from home. Other girls had.

Whatever happened, it interested her vastly just then to study arithmetic, which suddenly appeared to her to be a science of much utility.

On arriving home from school that afternoon, calmer of spirit and pleased with the sense of richness that a new interest inspires, she was surprised to find a message asking her to go to Hope House again.

She had not expected it, and yet—deep in her heart she had known that she would see Mrs. Barrington again soon. The message said Miss Sargle wished to see her, but Carmella would not have responded had she not been certain that Miss Sargle was merely acting for Mrs. Barrington.

First Carmella asked Maria. The latter hesitated, but yielded to the look of queer pleading in her daughter's dancing eyes.

"I'm glad you could come, Kate," said Mrs. Barrington, as Carmella entered. "I wanted to talk to you."

"Yes, Mrs. Barrington."

"You know you said the other day that I was 'high hat.'"

"Yes, Mrs. Barrington."

"But you were called away before you explained it. Of course I know something of what you mean. But

you can help me further if you will, Kate. And I want your help very much."

"Yes, Mrs. Barrington."

"Take your own mother now. How was I 'high hat' to her?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Barrington."

"Yet you know that I was, in some way?"

"My mother, she did not like it. Other women, they do not like it."

"But," said Mrs. Barrington, honestly bewildered, "don't they want to be helped?"

Carmella, who had been sitting opposite Mrs. Barrington, jumped to her feet and planted them far apart, like a sailor on a choppy sea. Her careful self-restraint blazed into sudden wrath.

" 'Help!' " she cried. "Help? What help? You try to teach my mother what she already knows. You teach her! Teach her? You can't teach my mother. She could teach you.

"She don't know maybe American. But she knows to sew. She knows lace. Yes! She could teach you. Why don't you learn something? Why don't you learn to make lace? Why don't you let my mother help you? She knows, my mother does.

"Why you always sit and think you do fine job when you just come and sit and smile—and smile down to us? My mother she could teach you lace in return for you teach her American. But you! Ho-ho! You

think you know all. You think we know nothing. You smile down.

"Am-er-i-can-i-za-tion!" Carmella pronounced the word as if she were spelling it. "Be damn!" she added.

For a moment Mrs. Barrington was stunned by this outbreak. She looked at the small, defiant figure, thinking blurred thoughts of immediate annihilation. Never, so far as she knew, had any human being dared to speak to her like that. Her own children—she started as she thought of them in contrast to this strange creature of Little Italy.

Margaret, thirteen. Just Carmella's age. Margaret was willful, but original—never! And John, aged fifteen. He rarely obeyed. But neither did he verbally rebel. He merely walked a sullen way of his own. For a brief, bewildered instant Mrs. Barrington wished that she too had a child who could speak like that, and who could be taught not to.

Carmella, too, was thinking. She panted in her excitement, like the winner of a hurdle race. Quickly she was ashamed, and she was frightened. Was not Mrs. Barrington the wife of the man who wanted her father's land? She had meant to be diplomatic.

Keenly she realized that it was her task to straighten out the real estate situation before her father learned that she had betrayed him. Yet she did not want to broach any such subject to the sponsor of the sewing class. In a vague way she realized that this would

hurt, rather than help, her plight. But she wanted to be in touch with the Barrington family. And now she had spoiled it all by this outbreak. Mrs. Barrington interrupted her racing thoughts.

"Carmella," she began, her poise recovered and again smiling, "tell me how to get your mother interested in the class once more."

"*Santo Dio*, Mrs. Barrington, don't smile like that," said Carmella.

"What!" Mrs. Barrington was again startled out of her composure.

"Don't smile," repeated Carmella. "Look friendly instead."

Mrs. Barrington's face was that of Mona Lisa being scolded in front of the class.

"But, Carmella ——" she began.

"You say the class is for the women," went on Carmella, like a ruthless rhyme. "But you boss it. You smile down and boss it. Stop smile and stop boss! My mother, she good as you. Some ways she's better. Not so much American, but more lace. Excuse me, please, but I got thing to do back home. Good-bye, Mrs. Barrington!"

"Wait a minute!" pleaded the sponsor, still suffering from a form of verbal shell-shock. "Would your mother come to the class if I asked her to teach me to make lace?"

"Maybe! I don't know. Maybe, if you act as if

you really want to learn instead of pretend to, and do not smile so high hat."

"Will you ask her, Kate?"

"Sure!" said Carmella, now in the doorway, struggling to make her escape.

"Then please tell her that I want to learn. I really do. And Kate ——" Mrs. Barrington had a sudden inspiration. Her Margaret might gain by seeing America in the making. Even John might learn that to be young and different need not mean to be sullen.

"Kate, I'd like it ever so much if you would come over to my house some day for luncheon. Will you? Please?"

Carmella turned in amazement. Here was a note in Mrs. Barrington's voice that she had never heard before. Never had she heard it in the voice of any American who was speaking to her. It rang true.

Even in trying to buy her father's land for less than it was worth—she hoped—neither Mr. Richmond nor Mr. Hastings had used that tone. They had been—well, high hat. And then they had been angry. Mrs. Barrington had turned from something that was high hat to something that was not that, and yet was not angry. It was something that thrilled Carmella. It sounded like human being to human being.

"I'd like to, Mrs. Barrington," answered Carmella. "Gee! I would like to. But I gotta ask my mother. And she ——"

"Could you come tomorrow?" asked Mrs. Barrington, adding: "If your mother is willing."

"School's tomorrow."

"Of course! How careless of me! There wouldn't be time. Then can you come Saturday?"

"I'll ask mother."

"Then let's drive around and ask mother now."

Mrs. Barrington had had the happiest inspiration of her social career. She knew that Carmella was in a dubious mood. For a moment, she was friendly. Driving around to the yellow cottage to ask mother would clinch the matter. Long years afterwards, when Carmella Coletta was a figure in the world, she thought back to this moment and patterned her conduct by it. At the time, the keenness of it escaped her. Her mind was on real estate deals, anyway.

Mrs. Barrington started toward the door with Carmella. Her sedan was waiting outside, and the well-trained Dixon showed no slight trace of surprise as his employer came out with the Italian girl of Doty Street.

Doty Street was having thrills. Two days ago, a splendid touring car, with two prosperous-looking men, had stopped at the Coletta cottage. Today, a heavy sedan, with uniformed chauffeur, stopped at the same yellow gate. And each time Carmella, Tommaso's kid, had emerged in state.

Mrs. Alibrio, next door, regretted that she had refused to lend her patent egg-beater to Maria when

the latter's had broken last week. She resolved to be more neighborly. Even if Mrs. Coletta did come from Naples and she from Sicily. After all, were not Italians Italians, whatever region they came from? Mussolini was teaching that. Mussolini, thought Mrs. Alibrio, peering through the curtains of her front windows, was a wise, wise man.

Carmella asked Mrs. Barrington into the house, with all the politeness of a Doge's palace. But the latter declined pleasantly, remembering not to smile.

"You just run in and ask your mother about Saturday," she said. "I've an appointment, and must hurry on."

Mrs. Barrington's appointment was with herself.

Carmella dashed into the house, breathless.

"May I go? May I go? Say I can! Say so, please, *mammuzza!*" she urged, after explaining her errand.

"Maybe I should ask your father?" said Maria slowly, doubting her own ears.

"Sure you should," agreed Carmella. "And if he says so, I can go, I can go?"

Maria nodded, and Carmella dashed back to the sedan.

"Thank you ever so much, Mrs. Barrington, and mother says I can go. She says to thank you. What time shall I come?"

"I'll send the machine for you," said Mrs. Barrington, smiling and then suddenly ceasing to smile.

"About twelve-thirty. Dixon, remember the place. I want you to stop here for Kate on Saturday at twelve-thirty."

"Yes, ma'am," said Dixon, and bestowed on Carmella a hearty wink.

The car moved off, leaving Carmella on the sidewalk.

Such a machine!

Such a chauffeur!

Such wonders!

And Mrs. Barrington! She rather was liking Mrs. Barrington. She rather liked Mrs. Barrington's chauffeur.

Chapter Six

A LUNCHEON COSTUME

AMONG those of Doty Street who had gazed and marveled at the glories of Carmella's recent arrivals was Nicolo Pieri, Carmella's radio friend, who lived in the six-family house across the street. He sauntered out as the Barrington car drove away, smoking a cigarette.

"Hello, kid!" he said. "Who's your high-hat friend?"

"She ain't high hat," declared Carmella, with a vehemence that would have astonished Mrs. Barrington, after the interview of a few moments earlier.

"Oh, she ain't, ain't she? She's got some high-hat buggy, I'll say."

"Sure she has. She's rich. Her husband is Barrington, the real estate man.

Nicolo whistled softly.

"Sure, I know who he is," he admitted. "Mike's his bootlegger."

"Mike Laudini, down the street?"

"Sure! I've pasted the labels on his gin bottles many a time."

"Then Mike's got a good customer, I bet," laughed Carmella. "They say he has money to throw away."

"Yeh, only he don't throw it. Mike says he's as tight as a new tire. But Mike says he won't have anything but the real goods—as real as there is. And he'll pay a fair price when he's sure."

"You bet he will," said Carmella, thinking of Greendale real estate.

"What's that, kid?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking."

"Say, kid! You're getting kind of funny. Flossy autos bringing you home, and having women like her for friends, and you ain't acting so terrible chummy with me, either. What is it, kid?"

For answer Carmella snatched the cigarette from his lips, threw it on the ground, leaned over and kissed him, and dashed into her house.

"That kid's getting too deep for me," Nicolo mused to himself. "I gotta make some money. I absolutely have."

He sauntered back across the street, lighting a fresh cigarette.

As casually as she could, Carmella announced to her mother that Mrs. Barrington was to send a machine for her on Saturday. Maria was excited. Much as she hated the head of the sewing class, she could not resist the thrilling sense of importance when her daughter was asked as a guest to the home of one so mighty.

That evening she did not insist that Carmella help her with the dishes.

And Carmella, curiously enough, said nothing of it to Tommaso.

The next morning Baby Enrico had a pain. With all the power of his young lungs he protested. Maria knew very well that it could not be a serious pain, or there would be less lung-power. Nevertheless, it would be as well to call the district nurse on her morning rounds.

Miss Young, who brought healing and friendship to that section of Little Italy, usually passed the corner of Doty Street about ten o'clock. Maria sent Carmella down to the corner to notify the gray-clad visitor that there was need of her in the Coletta household.

"Stay from school till you meet the nurse," said Maria, "and after you have sent her here, go to your teacher and tell her why you are late."

Miss Kelly was used to such excuses. At least a third of her pupils were oldest children, and therefore the interpreters for their families. It was no uncommon thing to excuse a child for half a day for a shopping excursion downtown with her mother, in order to do the talking.

Routine purchases, of course, were made in the shops of Little Italy, the signs of which were sometimes in English, sometimes in Italian, and sometimes mixed. The druggist on the corner, for example, had on his swinging sign the word "*Farmacia*," while on his win-

dow, in gold letters, were the words "Drug Store." All the storekeepers of Little Italy spoke two languages. Or, if they spoke only one, it was their native tongue.

But at least twice a year each Little Italy mother prided herself on going downtown to the big stores, at least to look at the piled wonders of merchandise, and always to stop in the five-and-ten for household necessities. On these trips their oldest boy or girl always attended them.

What puzzled Miss Kelly was how Carmella could be spared from the interview between her mother and the district nurse.

"Does the nurse speak Italian?" she asked.

"Oh, no! A few words. But not to talk."

"And your mother doesn't speak English, you've told me."

"She understands some. But not to speak. Only with the nurse she say a little in English. The nurse, she is the only one."

"If she can talk English with the nurse she can with others," said Miss Kelly logically.

Carmella laughed.

"She don't dare."

"And why not?"

"She's afraid of making mistakes. We laugh at her when she talk English so silly."

"Who laughs at her?"

"All us kids," said Carmella, chuckling.

Miss Kelly was properly stern in rebuking this habit.

Carmella said "Yes, Miss Kelly," at appropriate intervals, and thought of other things—mostly real estate.

That evening she decided, on sudden impulse, to tell her father that Mrs. Barrington had asked her to luncheon. To her surprise, he made little comment. If her mother had said she could go, very well! Would she please start the victrola? Of the failure of his real estate negotiations he had not spoken since they had said good-bye to Mr. Barrington's agents.

Carmella was disappointed at his lack of interest. She wondered if by any chance her mother had talked with her father about it. Hitherto, it had been safe to talk to either without fear of parental breach of confidence.

It proved that nothing serious had been the matter with Baby Enrico. A tiny dose of castor oil was all he needed. But the district nurse's visit gave Mrs. Coletta the chance she very much wanted to ask Miss Young, not as a nurse but as a friend, what a mother could do with a daughter who was steadily acquiring outside interests and who was inclined to talk back.

Many, many times in her three years of work in Little Italy Miss Young had heard this question, in one form or another. In more than one group of mothers that she encountered it was the chief, almost

the only, subject of discussion. But experience had taught her that there was little she could do.

"Love her. Sympathize. Praise her for helping you with the housework. Get her to tell you what she does, if you can without nagging. Don't nag. Have Father Carbone see that she goes to church and confession regularly. But oh, Mrs. Coletta, if only you would learn to talk English with her!"

This was the substance of Miss Young's advice. A part of it Maria understood, and shook her head, and sighed.

So easy to say; so hard to do. Especially that "speak English" part of it. Carmella was a wonderful girl, but she was not sympathetic, like Miss Young.

Maria thought back to far-away days in a far-away land. She had not grown away from her own mother like this. Of course, she had had an occasional escapade. Like all young folk. And been punished for it. It was but natural.

And Tommaso, he had been a radical young man when she began timidly to go about with him. Her mother had scolded her for choosing so impetuous a mate. Of course! But, ah! Never had there been this horrible curtain of strange speech between them. Like a black barrier. Like steel netting behind which prisoners stood when friends visited them. One could see—ah, yes!—one could see. The outside. But that was all.

Through the week Maria sighed and thought of

"I SHALL WEAR MY SCHOOL DRESS. IT IS MORE PROPER—IN AMERICA"

those Italian days, and wished Enrico would be sick again—not too sick—so that she could once more talk with Miss Young. On Saturday morning she woke Carmella half an hour early.

"We have much to do," she said.

"Why?" asked Carmella sleepily.

"Because this day is the day you go to lunch with Mrs. Barrington, and you must be dressed for it."

"Dressed how?" demanded Carmella, waking suddenly and sitting up.

"In your best, of course. In your white dress, made over from first communion. Of course!"

"But no, mother! That would not do. My school dress I shall wear. It is new and it is clean. It is what I met Mrs. Barrington in. It is what I shall wear."

"Carmella!" said her mother, horrified. "It is not proper. For going to lunch with Mrs. Barrington—I like her not, but she is a great lady. You shall wear your best."

"I shall wear my school dress, but with the gray stockings instead of the brown, and with my Sunday shoes," said Carmella. "It is more proper—in America," she added.

Maria recoiled, physically staggering.

Here, at last, was the retort she had unconsciously been dreading all these last few years. "In America." Her child, born near the dear beautiful Naples, was

taunting her mother with different ways and manners, because this was America—the America of the young.

In one blinding instant she thought to ask Tommaso —but no!—Tommaso had never beaten her—he was a good husband, whom she loved—he would rage if she should ask him to give up all he had won here of money and of business, and go back—back to the land of their own language.

Here, finally, had come the crisis of authority. It was not proper that Carmella should wear her school dress. Yet Carmella demanded.

Maria knew it as a crisis, clean and clear, like a vision.

Carmella sensed it doubtfully, half wonderingly. She sensed that between herself and whatever America might mean to her, there was now only her father as a barrier.

"I shall wear the school dress or I shall not go," she said calmly. "I shall not be made silly. It is proper, in America."

That phrase again! Maria felt herself beaten by a phrase. Her mind turned to little Enrico. Aha! Enrico, the dear baby boy. Such a willful baby, he! But he was born in America. She had heard them say that he could become President of the United States, because he was born in this country. What magic was there in this country, anyway? Magic that somehow she had missed. Was not a President something like

the King? What a country! If only people here spoke a real language! Like Italian, for example.

"Very well!" she said. "*Va bene!* You shall wear what you choose. *Qualche giorno* you shall know that your mother was right."

As in a daze she helped Carmella dress in her school frock, with her Sunday shoes and stockings. She was beaten. But she believed that Carmella's adventures of the day would vindicate her.

In the light of the forenoon's program, it seemed foolish to have awakened Carmella early. There was nothing to do, after the dishes were washed and wiped, and the beds made. Carmella wandered outside, only to find Nicolo waiting for her.

"Say, kid! he said. "Let's get going somewhere! What do you say to a movie?"

"What's on?" asked Carmella.

"There's a feature film at the Gaiety. We'll catch the eleven o'clock show."

"Nothing doing!" said Carmella. "I got to be back here by half-past twelve. Got a date."

"A date! Who's it with?" asked Nicolo, aggressively suspicious.

"Only just one of my high-hat friends," said Carmella demurely.

"This Mrs. Real Estate?" demanded Nicolo.

"Maybe no and maybe yes, you can use your head and guess," answered Carmella, using one of the formulas popular in her school just then.

"She ain't such-a-much," said Nicolo. "I been finding out about her. She's a flop, and you know it."

"She's a lady you don't talk about like that," said Carmella, and swung a heavy hand across Nicolo's mouth.

"*Dannato!*" he exclaimed, holding his hand over his jaw. "Where do you get that stuff, kid?"

"Never mind where I get it. You watch it."

Carmella turned and walked into her home, reading last evening's paper through twice while she waited.

Promptly at twelve-thirty the Barrington sedan, with Dixon at the wheel, drove up to the yellow gateway. If Dixon had a vice, it was that of punctuality. Sometimes he waited around the corner for a full quarter-hour, in order to drive up on the instant of the appointed time. It was as much a matter of principle with him not to appear early as not to appear late. Her friends often complimented Mrs. Barrington on the possession of Dixon.

This was a real compliment, for when she had first engaged him, Dixon had not been such a paragon of promptness. Mrs. Barrington had trained him, since her husband would not. But Dixon now believed that he had always been as punctual. And, having been trained, he liked it.

Prompt as was the chauffeur, Carmella was waiting for him. She had been at the front window for about the same period that he had been parked around the corner.

Carmella rushed for the door, but turned as Maria came after her, calling an awed "good-bye!"

Carmella threw her arms around her mother's neck, and said in Neapolitan:

"Good-bye, mother of mine! You are good. You are kind. Thank you for letting me wear this dress. You are, oh, so good!"

So quickly had Carmella sensed the responsibilities of dominance.

Maria wiped her eyes and went back to her kitchen, praising God for such a daughter as Carmella who, although American, was so kind to her old Italian mother.

Maria was thirty-four years of age.

Chapter Seven

"SOMETHING!"

CARMELLA ran down the short path, and Dixon opened the rear door of the sedan. Except that he did not step out of the car and salute, he did exactly as he would have done for Mrs. Barrington, and in downtown traffic congestion, when she was shopping, she herself did not call for these flourishes.

But Carmella ignored the open door, ran around to the other side of the machine and jumped into the front seat beside Dixon.

"You wish to ride in front?" asked the latter.

"You bet I do," said the girl happily. "I ain't your boss, you know. I want to talk when I ride. The way we would if you took me out for a buggy ride. Don't you, Dixon?"

Dixon chuckled at the informal camaraderie coupled with the formality of his last name.

"All right, kid," he said. "Whatever suits you suits me. You're Mrs. Barrington's guest, you know."

"Sure I am! Don't I know it? Can't her guests ride in the front seat if they want to?"

"They have," said Dixon, chuckling again.

As they drove down Doty Street, Carmella pointed casually to the house of Mike Laudini.

"Know who lives there?" she asked.

"Not a hint," answered Dixon.

"Mike Laudini, your boss's bootlegger."

Dixon almost drove the machine into the curbing as he turned to look.

"How do you know he is?"

"How do I know? He told me himself," said Carmella, lying cheerfully. "And I'll let you know that your boss is a ve-ery particular customer. Didn't you ever drive there, nights?"

"Mike delivers," said Dixon.

"Sure he delivers. And sometimes slips you a pint of drug-store stuff, I'll bet."

"Say, kid!" exclaimed Dixon, "where'd you learn all this society gossip?"

Carmella laughed joyously.

"Just because you live over on the boulevard don't think we ain't wise to you. Get me?"

"I reckon I get you all right," said Dixon, stepping on the accelerator.

He intended to drive the rest of the way in silence. But Carmella's plan was otherwise.

"Don't you adore to drive?" she asked presently.

"Just the same way you adore to go to school, I reckon," he said. "It's my job, that's all."

"Gee!" said Carmella. "That's funny. I'd love it."

"They tell me before traffic got the way it is there

was some fun in being a chauffeur," admitted Dixon. "But ever since I've been at it, it's nothing but dodge bumpers and crossing crashes."

"Then why do you do it?" Carmella was insistent.

"Got to do something for a start, haven't I? I've only been chauffing a couple of years. This is my first job, outside of carrying papers. But I didn't want to be a newsboy all my life, any more than I want to do this forever."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Carmella. One of her cherished ideals was busily deflating. She knew several chauffeurs, and they were mostly pleasant young men who often took their sweethearts out to ride in the evening in their employers' cars. Her chief objection to Nicolo Pieri was that he was not yet old enough to be a chauffeur.

She had already highly resolved that her first beau should be a professional driver. And if he did a little bootlegging on the side he would have even more money with which to lavish gifts on her. This Dixon person was a new kind of chauffeur to her. She turned to him, saying:

"You been driving only two years? Gee, you're good at it! How old are you, anyway?"

"I had my twentieth birthday last week," he answered.

"Gee!"

"What's the matter with twenty?" he asked.

"I thought you were most as old as dad," said Carmella.

Dixon laughed aloud.

"And how old's your dad?" he asked.

"Thirty-five, I think. He's a war veteran. Are you?"

"No!" said Dixon, glumly.

"Why not?"

"They held the war too early. I wasn't old enough in nineteen-eighteen."

"Oh!" There was a note of sympathy in Carmella's voice.

They drove on in silence, until the machine was turning from the boulevard into Laurel Avenue, on which the Barrington home faced. Then Carmella asked:

"How do these Barrington people dress for lunch, Mr. Dixon?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, do they dress up, like they do for evening dinner? I read in the paper that their kind of people have dinner at night. How about lunch. Do they dress up?"

"Not so you'd notice it. They don't dress up any more than nothing at all. Whatever they happen to be wearing. I've even seen Mrs. B. eating lunch in her riding togs. You're dressed all right, kid, if that's what's worrying you. You look like a four-hundred, if you want to know."

"Thank you, Mr. Dixon," said Carmella.

The Barrington butler admitted her to the house. He did not awe Carmella. Instead, he interested her. She had read about butlers in the Sunday paper's detective stories. Usually, she knew, a butler was suspected of the murder, which after all proved to have been committed by the guest who had been asked at the suggestion of Lady So-and-So. She gazed studiously at Hammond, trying to decide how many murders he might have been suspected of.

He was, to be sure, the first actual butler she had ever seen, but he was the one to suffer as they talked. Later, in the servants' dining room, he tried to explain it. There had been no little speculation as to the nature of the guest, after Mrs. Barrington's daughter Margaret had told her mother's maid who was coming. Hammond was promptly quizzed after he had admitted her.

"She's not like anything you'd suspect," he said. "She's—she's like she knows everything without having learned."

"That's quality," said the cook promptly. "I'm glad I made a good salad dressing."

"Quality!" The voice of the pseudo-French lady's maid registered staccato scorn. "She's only a dago kid from over Little Italy way. Miss Margaret told me. Her mother's got something under her belt about that Hope House place. And this kid's a keynote."

Hammond the butler shook his head.

"Whoever she is and whatever she is," he said firmly, "She's got something."

Back in the reception room, Carmella was thinking over butlers in general and this butler in particular. But this pre-occupation did not prevent her from recording quick and accurate impressions of the room itself, done mostly in cream and rose, with carved needle-point chairs.

Carmella noted with some surprise that there was no Morris chair. She had expected to find the place filled with them. She must look into this.

Mrs. Barrington's greeting was informally cordial. Carmella quickly noted her gown. No, she had not dressed up. Her own school dress was in perfect keeping with the affair. A slight flutter of triumph set her heart to trilling.

And then, for a fractional thought, she was conscious of picturing her mother, that afternoon, asking her with anxious detail what was worn. Maria would want to know that, even before she asked what food was served. And Carmella would have to tell her that the school dress was right. There was an instant's sympathy with Maria. But then Carmella thought of the confirmation frock, and shuddered.

"Did Dixon bring you here without trouble?" asked Mrs. Barrington, motioning Carmella to a seat.

"Oh, yes! He's a wonderful driver, isn't he, Mrs. Barrington?"

"Dixon's a very careful driver. By the way, Kate,

we're to have Mr. Barrington home to luncheon today. He's just telephoned. He doesn't usually come. He'll be here a little later. We won't wait."

A sudden tremor shook Carmella. Mr. Barrington —to sit and eat with him, at his own table! Her mind surged into a thousand paths, and tried to hold to them all at once. Would there be a chance to talk real estate? Would there be a chance? Would there be?

Mrs. Barrington found her guest distracted for the next few moments, but thought it due to Carmella's confusion at being in a boulevard home for the first time. Carmella's actual thoughts would have astounded her.

Presently Hammond announced luncheon. Mrs. Barrington's two children followed the butler in, and she introduced them.

"My children, Kate. Margaret—and John. I want you to know each other."

Carmella extended her hand to each, having mentally pre-viewed this scene for several nights. The trio solemnly shook hands.

In the dining room Carmella was seated at Mrs. Barrington's right. It interested her to see that Mr. Barrington's chair was at his wife's left. Her parents, now, sat at opposite ends of the table. She considered this deeply while waiting for the luncheon to appear.

The serving of the food interested her more than the food itself. She watched her hostess closely, as

each dish was brought on, and imitated with a success that surprised her. Secretly she was terrified, but outwardly she gave no evidence of her fears. Mrs. Barrington had purposely ordered a simple luncheon, and was deliberate in serving herself from the dishes that Hammond presented. She was determined that Carmella should have no cause to think of this affair as "high hat."

The two children studied Carmella closely. It was evident that their mother had told them something about the guest that stirred their curiosity. Margaret chatted freely, asking Kate, which was the only name for Carmella that she knew, whether she swam and rode and played basketball, and what dancing school did she go to and did she paddle a canoe and didn't she hate piano practice, and didn't she hate bedtime stories by radio and didn't she simply adore Tom Mix.

With perfect frankness Carmella furnished negatives to most of the flood of questions. John, two years older, said little. But occasionally he and his sister exchanged glances, as when Carmella admitted that she had no dancing teacher. He wondered why his mother's guest could show so little embarrassment at having none of his sister's major accomplishments.

Presently, seeing that she was being catechized, it amused Carmella to say:

"No, I don't do practically a thing. All I do is go to school, see a movie when I can, and help dad on his real estate."

Whereupon John almost jumped out of his chair. He became garrulous on the instant.

"What do you mean, Kate?" he demanded. "Helping your dad on his real estate?"

"Oh," said Carmella demurely, "dad digs foundations for a living. But he plays real estate on the side."

"But you said you helped him. How do you do it?"

"By talking English. Dad don't talk a word—or maybe a word and a half—of English. I'm his interpreter."

Margaret and John both paid their guest new attention. John was especially eager.

"You mean you talk business for your dad?" he asked.

"Sure!" said Carmella calmly. "Don't you?" she added, realizing suddenly that the boy was admiring her.

"Dad thinks I'm dumb," he said, keeping his eyes on his plate. "If he'd only let me—gee! I'll bet I could help him slip that Union Trust crowd a wallop."

Carmella saw him straighten up and look as she wanted her man to look, when she had one. Now that she had discovered that to be a chauffeur was not the chief aim of human ambition, she felt humble and searching.

"Sure you can help him, John, if he'll let you," she said sympathetically. Now for the first time she realized that she admired this boy of the other world.

With this came realization that she hated his sister. Margaret's questions had been petty, and all for purposes of comparison. She had set out to feed a superiority complex. John was just talking. His questions, and the discussion that followed, helped to let out feelings instead of imprison them.

"This," said Carmella to herself, "is probably the only time I shall ever have luncheon here. But I should like to see John again. He'd make a wonderful bootlegger."

Her interest in the food and service and the other children ceased abruptly, however, when she heard the front door open and a breezy masculine voice call from the hallway:

"Sorry to be late, m' dear. Unexpected thing came up about that Greendale deal. Be right in, as soon as I wash up."

Carmella almost jumped to her feet in her excitement. Her thoughts raced in a way she had learned to dread. For when they raced she usually did something to worry about later. But by the time Mr. Barrington entered the room, she was calm again.

Her teacher, Miss Kelly, had once told Principal Carroll that Carmella had wonderful control for so high-keyed a child.

Chapter Eight

REAL ESTATE VALUES

MR. BARRINGTON was big and ruddy-faced and jovial. He looked around the table and nodded cheerfully as he came in.

Mrs. Barrington turned to her youthful guest and said:

"Kate, this is Mr. Barrington. Rodney, this is Kate Coletta, the girl I told you about, who is helping me so wonderfully at Hope House." Carmella winced at this surprising statement.

Mr. Barrington shook hands cordially with Carmella, who was half-surprised that he did not know her. For an instant she forgot that, well as she knew his affairs, he had never seen her. As he took his seat beside his wife she asked, as an answer to his shout from the hall:

"The Greendale matter proving complicated?"

"No, not that. Just moving a little faster than I expected. Bus line starting next week, and I've already got an annexation ordinance planted, to be presented to the aldermen next Tuesday. Richmond arranged it. He's got our holdings all fixed—all but one little quarter acre or so. Real estate that will shoot

for the sky next week. Well, well, how's everybody? Hello, Margaret, my dear! Hello, John! How's the boy?"

His children responded dutifully, though obviously bored. Margaret, who was beginning to feel the influence of the languid pose, had more than once protested at her father's incurable habit of talking the day's business at table. He talked business everywhere. He could no more help it than a small boy can help jumping and shouting. It was the boy still in him. His interests were everybody's.

Pressed for a defense of talking business to his wife at dinner, when Margaret had protested, he had insisted to himself that he did it only that Mrs. Barrington might know his affairs in case—well, in case anything happened; the kind of thing the life insurance advertisements harped on, for example.

He knew in his heart that this was not the real reason; but having thought of it, he let it obsess him until he bragged at the club that if anything happened to him his wife could take over the business on an instant's notice. And, indeed, he would have been horrified had he known how little real attention Mrs. Barrington was paying to his business chatter. Her mind was concerned with other things. Yet she invariably maintained the appearance of interest.

In contrast to his short-bodied, dynamic vigor, his wife had true Norman figure and poise and reserve. She leaned slightly forward as she talked or ques-

tioned. He leaned back and spoke with vast implications of authority.

She answered "Yes," or "No," or "Indeed, really," at appropriate intervals until he had ended his narrative. Suddenly, under the resentful glare of his daughter's eyes, it appeared to occur to him that he had duties to his wife's guest.

"How do you do, Miss Coletta?" he asked, turning cheerfully to Carmella and bowing slightly. "Please excuse me for talking shop at the table. Bad habit, I know."

He laughed delightedly, like a boy, glancing at his wife and daughter as if the joke were on them. His daughter glowered. He went on:

"Mrs. Barrington has spoken of you. You're a Hope House girl, I understand. Never been there myself, but Mrs. Barrington tells me it's an interesting place. Tell me, please, what you do there. You're not as interested in Greendale as Mrs. Barrington is, I'll wager. She's looking for a pearl necklace out of it."

"Yes, sir!" said Carmella.

Icicles and red-hot pokers had raced up and down her back as he had told his wife of the state of affairs in Greendale. The game was bigger and more confusing than she had thought. Pearl necklaces! Of city ordinances and annexation projects she had the haziest of notions. But evidently, in some mysterious

way, they were connected with such items as pearl necklaces.

"Yes, sir!" she repeated, pretending to have choked a bit as she thought. "I am interested in Greendale. My dad has some land out there. Some men tried to buy it the other day."

"Rodney!" exclaimed Mrs. Barrington. For her husband was suddenly holding his knife and fork in his hands, both straight in the air. And he was staring at Carmella as even John had not stared.

"Su-weet Jerusalem!" he was saying.

Practically every early habit of his to which Mrs. Barrington had objected in earlier days had now come back to him, like a spell. Both of his elbows were on the table. He had reverted to an expletive she hated.

"Rodney!" she repeated. But he was oblivious.

"Who was trying to buy your father's land?" he asked softly.

"Two men. Mr. Hastings and Mr. Richmond."

"Su-weet Jerusalem!" said Mr. Barrington again.

Later, when he recalled his perturbation on this occasion, he wondered if he ought not to play poker oftener than every Saturday night at the Pioneer Club, to improve his emotional technique. But who in the world, he asked himself, would suspect that a dago kid picked up by his wife at a settlement house would prove to be the key figure in a real estate deal?

"Nobody!" he once shouted to himself, and then flushed.

The fact that he had grown rich in land developments stood as tangible evidence that he was a good business man. Both in the realtors' exchange and in the Bankers' Club he was rated as the life of the party. He knew how to entertain when there was a dollar mark at the end of the trail.

Through the rest of the luncheon Carmella felt like a queen, so wholly was his brilliance focussed on her. By finger-bowl time she was sure that he was the most wonderful man she had ever met. And so friendly! She had always supposed these rich men were cold and repellent.

Margaret and John relapsed into sullen silence as they watched their father. Dimly they realized the situation. Mrs. Barrington, who sensed it better than they, was inclined to be jubilant. Now, perhaps, her husband, previously a facile scorner, would appreciate the deep significance of Americanization work at Hope House.

After the coffee, with demi-tasse chocolate for the children, Mr. Barrington looked at the banjo clock on the wall and said to his wife:

"I'm dated for golf at two-thirty. If you can spare Miss Coletta for a few minutes, I'd like to talk real estate to her."

Mrs. Barrington smiled. To Carmella she said:

"I really didn't invite you to a business luncheon, Kate. I didn't know that you and Mr. Barrington had real estate interests in common. Would you like

IN THE CREAM-AND-GOLD ROOM THEY FACED EACH OTHER

to talk to him about land? Because, of course, you know you needn't, if you don't want to. Perhaps you'd rather wait till you talk with your father."

But the Norman touch was not needed. Carmella was already quivering with eagerness.

"You bet I'd like to talk," she said, with a fervor that even Mrs. Barrington, with all her perceptions, did not understand.

Mr. Barrington chuckled, as if relieved from some anxiety, and followed his wife in rising.

"Let's go into the front room, Kate," he said. "You can talk with Mrs. Barrington about Hope House after I've started for the day's work at golf. Does your father play golf?"

"My father he works," said Carmella severely.

"By Jove, I thought I did," said Mr. Barrington. "Don't talk to me as if I didn't, please. Maybe I'll sell a hundred-thousand-dollar property this very afternoon, Kate, at about the twelfth hole."

"You play and work too?" asked Carmella.

"I absolutely do."

This was such a new idea to Carmella that it needed some time for adequate digestion. She was still ruminating when, in the cream-and-gold room, they faced each other.

Mr. Barrington chose to introduce the subject:

"You were your father's interpreter that day," he said.

"Yes, sir!"

"And he wouldn't sell for five thousand?"

"No, sir!"

"Why not?"

"Because I told him not to."

"Oh!" said Mr. Barrington, drawling the word in perplexity. "Why did you tell him that?"

"Because I've got as much right to that pearl necklace as your wife has, if you want to know."

"Su-weet Jerusalem!" Mr. Barrington's subconscious self was talking now. By sheer atomic strength he forced himself back to conscious thought.

"And what will he sell for now?"

"I don't know, sir," said Carmella, her knees quivering. "He said seven thousand then. But he didn't know about the bus line and the annexation."

"Damn the kid!" exclaimed Mr. Barrington under his breath.

"Don't they make it worth more, Mr. Barrington?"

"Yes, Kate, they do."

("I'll be a sport with this kid if I lose ten thousand," said the realtor to himself.)

"Well, Mr. Barrington, I heard Mr. Richmond tell Mr. Hastings that you'd pay twice what it was worth to get dad's land," said Carmella.

"Oh, did you?" (Trouble loomed for Mr. Richmond in the near future.) He went on:

"And what do you think the land is worth, Kate?"

"Dad was going to hold it for four thousand, and twice that is eight thousand," said Carmella.

"Well, but—dammit, kid!—Mr. Hastings offered you fifty-one hundred, he tells me—that's more than your father asked ——"

Carmella hesitated, gazing at the realtor in sorry misery. Her lips quivered as she answered:

"M-Mr. B-Barrington," she half sobbed. "I've got something to tell you. I d-d-didn't interpret right to dad. I heard Mr. Hastings say—or Mr. Richmond—what he said to the other man. D-Dad would have sold for four thousand. I t-translated wrong. I kept s-saying that Mr. Hastings wouldn't give but only three thousand five hundred. And I kept telling Mr. Hastings that dad wouldn't sell for less than seven thousand. I—I—l-lied, Mr. Barrington."

Suddenly Carmella burst into tears, a situation with which Mr. Barrington had had small experience. His wife's Norman blood did not burst into tears, whatever the provocation. Carmella wept quietly for a moment, and then burst into language again.

"I ch-cheated, Mr. B-Barrington. I ch-cheated. I didn't want dad to work so hard and then somebody else make all the money. Dad would kill me if he knew it. Don't ever let him know it, please, Mr. Barrington."

Mr. Barrington, all at once, felt like a knight errant. In business matters he was known by his associates and competitors to be as sympathetic as a railroad crossing. But in some odd way this seemed different from ordinary business. Carmella was, for one thing, his

wife's guest. And the story she had just told—hell, what a kid!

"Listen, Kate," he said. "I size it that you run the works. So listen to me. I want your dad's land because there may be a profit in it for me. But if plans don't go through, there'll be a loss. Now listen, kid! I can stand a loss and your father can't.

"I think the plans will go through. This business is a gamble, and I can afford to do it. But if they don't ——"

Mr. Barrington shrugged his shoulders.

"Your dad's figure of four thousand dollars was a speculative one," he continued. "If my plan works, he can get it, and a lot more. If it doesn't work, he loses. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give him, cash down, Monday noon in City Hall, eight thousand dollars for his land. Is it a bargain?"

"I'll ask him," said Carmella.

"He'll do what you tell him."

"I think he will sell for eight thousand," said Carmella.

"I'll send Dixon or a taxi for you at eleven-thirty, Monday. Tell your dad to bring his papers. I'm off for golf. Good-bye, Kate, and I'm very glad Mrs. Barrington met you."

The realtor held out his hand, shook Carmella's heartily, and was gone.

The child stood dazed. Mrs. Barrington entered shortly and chatted with her. But afterwards all that

Carmella could remember of this later conversation was that her hostess had asked silly questions about sewing and lace-making, and that Dixon took her home. She could not remember speaking to Dixon, all the way.

To her father that evening she recounted the interview, without mentioning bus lines or annexations.

"Eight thousand, did he say?" asked Tommaso.

"Eight thousand," repeated Carmella.

Tommaso thought a few moments before answering. Then he said:

"Tell him he is a fool, but I take it."

"At eleven-thirty, Monday?" asked Carmella.

"I can arrange it then."

Carmella danced her happy way to bed that night. The anxiety that had clouded her way through recent days was changed to an almost overwhelming reaction of joy.

Before she went to bed she knelt. Her prayer consisted of a promise to God to confess to Father Carbone how she had cheated her father Tommaso into four thousand dollars more than he had expected.

To confess to Tommaso himself was beyond the realm of imagined possibility.

And that night she dreamed of pearl necklaces.

Chapter Nine

A CERTIFIED CHECK

"DAMN it!" exclaimed Carmella at seven-thirty o'clock the following Monday morning.

She rose sleepily to her elbow and glared at the busily ringing alarm clock. This clock was a luxury for which she had teased her father. To her surprise, her mother had approved, feeling that it would save her own time in rousing the family after Tommaso had gone to work. For of all the children, only Giuseppe rose at six, with his parents. The others were sleepy-heads.

It still puzzled Maria to think of living in a land where every home had its own clocks, almost one in every room sometimes, instead of relying on the bell of a nearby church for the time. A clock for Carmella, however, she had favored, specifying that the latter must in turn see that her younger sisters were sufficiently roused to get up, a duty which Carmella performed with punctilious and energetic delight.

Her sisters had quickly learned to dread these abrupt attacks, and usually beat Carmella out of bed when the alarm sounded in her room.

"I'm up!" shouted Raffaela before Carmella was really awake.

"So'm I!" echoed Paola.

And both began racing into their clothes. But this morning Carmella was tired. All night she had dreamed of the day's negotiations, hoping they could be accomplished without Tommaso's learning how she had tricked him. She addressed the clock:

"Damn you! Damn a clock that does what you thought you wanted it to the night before!"

Lazily she rolled back to the pillow, and dozed again.

Her sisters, meanwhile, finished their dressing and prepared to go downstairs. Surprised by the silence in Carmella's room, they looked in, and exchanged glances which suddenly clicked into a common thought. Here, for the first time they could remember, they were in a position to work revenge on their older sister.

Silently, but as if by prearranged plan, they moved to opposite sides of her bed, glanced at each other in a mutual signal, and then suddenly stripped off the bedclothing and began pummelling.

Carmella's reaction was instantaneous and sure. Leaping to the floor, she flung out her fists with ready force and skill. But her sisters were fully dressed, while she was handicapped by the vulnerability of night clothing. The younger sisters had a temporary advantage, and in the flush of enthusiastic revenge were willing to accept blows that in other battles

would have counted them out. They rushed at Carmella, stepping heavily on her bare toes as they struck. Shrill shrieks filled the house, and the battle royal was raging as Maria dashed upstairs and into the room.

"Stop it! Stop it!" she cried in Italian, as she separated the fighters, slapping here and there to enforce her commands.

Carmella sat sullenly on the bed, not deigning to speak.

"It's what she does to us, mamma!" cried Paola, while Raffaela retired to the corner and laughed hysterically.

Carmella's shame kept her silent. To talk would be to tell tales on children younger than she. She had been caught fairly enough. She would take what blame was coming. But the humiliation of living in dreams of becoming a real estate factor only to discover herself in the middle of a babyish mêlée was greater than the possible consequences of the battle.

Instead of punishing, however, Maria went downstairs, after telling them all to hurry. She had known something of Carmella's methods with the younger children, and she had the feeling that a just revenge had been accomplished.

Raffaela and Paola promptly followed her, and demanded breakfast, giggling occasionally in their excitement. Carmella dressed slowly, debating whether to slip out the front door, or to go back to the kitchen and face the covert jibes. Her impulse was to avoid

the family, but she realized that this would be a confession of defeat.

The two younger girls taunted her by looks instead of words. Carmella glared at them, but said nothing.

"You are not going to school this morning?" asked Maria.

"No! At eleven-thirty I must be here to talk English for father out in Greendale."

"Then you can help me with the cooking and the housework," said Maria.

And here was a second triumph for the sisters. They were chuckling happily as they left for school.

Carmella helped, but at eleven went to her room to change her dress for the day's real work. She added an ornament or two, having read somewhere that appearance was a factor in business success.

To her surprise, and slightly to her disappointment, Mr. Barrington himself did not appear. Dixon halted the car in front of the gate precisely at eleven-thirty, bringing Mr. Hastings. Tommaso had reached the house from a small job in the city a few minutes before.

Carmella liked the big, jovial Mr. Barrington, in spite of the fact that she felt that he talked down to her. Moreover, in some half-conscious fashion, she felt that she wanted him to know her father. Somehow, in ways she could not foresee, it might help Tommaso to get on.

Mr. Hastings she neither liked nor trusted. Her heart sank at the possibility that he would say some-

thing that would indicate to her father, if he understood it, how she had fooled him before. One of her problems was to discover just how much English Tommaso did understand. There were many times when it would be convenient to know.

Should he discover the truth, even though the trick was winning some thousands of dollars for him, Carmella could not guess what would happen. He might buy her a gift, or he might punish her. He might even do both. Of all the human beings she knew, Carmella admired her father the most, and understood him least. He was so silent, so determined, so heavy of hand.

She climbed into the rear seat beside Mr. Hastings and beckoned her father to follow. She would have liked to ride with Dixon, but she knew that she must be between the two men.

Without even a "good morning," Mr. Hastings turned to Carmella and said:

"Has your father got the deed with him?"

The girl translated, and Tommaso tapped his breast pocket.

"Let's see it," said Mr. Barrington's agent. "I don't want to foozle things out at the recorder's office, now that we've decided to pay your dad's hold-up."

Always he talked to Carmella. And she thrilled at being her father's agent in so vast an enterprise. She was to Tommaso what Hastings was to Barrington. Her anxiety could not entirely kill her sense of glory.

In previous affairs her task as family interpreter

had involved finance hardly more than the price of a dress or a suit of clothes. Now she was dealing in thousands. Not merely as agent but, unknown to any but herself, as a decisive factor. At thirteen, one is perhaps entitled to the thrill of dominance. Some, indeed, never pass that stage of youth.

For an instant she hesitated at Mr. Hastings' demand for the deed. She had seen important papers torn up, to turn the tide of a heroine's fortunes on the screen. But she remembered Dixon on the front seat. From the angle of his head she knew that he was listening. He would make a witness if any desperate work were tried. And so, constructing a sprightly melodrama as she went along, she told Tommaso to let Mr. Hastings see the deed.

The latter nodded as he examined the paper, and presently handed it back to Carmella, who passed it to her father.

"All right," he said, speaking to the girl. "We've had the title examined in advance, along with our own land. We'll be through in ten minutes after we get to the town clerk's office out here."

"Have you got the money—eight thousand dollars?" asked Carmella, sceptically.

"Certainly! Certified check."

Mr. Hastings showed it to her. To her inexperienced eyes it looked like a check that had been cancelled.

"What is certified?" she demanded.

Mr. Hastings' explanation was too technical to satisfy. She couldn't understand, not even enough to explain to Tommaso. And he, sensing difficulty, was instantly suspicious. He was used to money, and checks, and savings account books. But, since the man had differentiated this check from others, he would have none of it. He spoke a dozen words in Italian to Carmella, who thereupon explained that money or nothing was her father's motto. As she finished Dixon turned in his seat, slowing down the machine.

"Listen, kid!" he said. "Excuse me for butting in, Mr. Hastings, but she'll understand me better. A certified check is extra special. Safe as the Bank of Italy. It's better than money, because it isn't so easy to lose. Take it from me! Tell your old man to take it, and after we leave the office out here I'll drive you to his bank, whatever it is, to deposit it."

"Dixon!" exclaimed Mr. Hastings hotly.

"Yes, sir!"

"I'll give the orders here."

"Very well, sir! You will after I've followed Mrs. Barrington's orders, which were to see that Kid Kate and her old man were looked out for in every way. Those are my first orders, sir."

From Mr. Hastings' answering silence, as from the words and tones of this brief passage, Carmella instantly knew that Mrs. Barrington and her husband's agent were not friends.

She knew that Dixon and Hastings were not friends.

She knew that Dixon could be relied on in any emergency. Her voice sang a sudden song of triumph as she cried:

"Go ahead, Mr. Dixon, to the town clerk's office."

She wondered if she had done it as Norma Talmadge would have done it.

In this particular state the town clerk was also the recorder of deeds. The transfer was made quickly, and the sale recorded, and Mr. Barrington's check for eight thousand dollars handed to Tommaso. The party returned to the machine.

"I'm driving Mr. Coletta and his daughter to their bank, Mr. Hastings," said Dixon. "Where shall I drop you?"

Mr. Hastings' face clouded, and he hesitated a moment. Then he said:

"Drive me into town, and drop me off at the first taxi stand you come to. I'll mention this thing to Mr. Barrington."

"Very good, sir!" said Dixon.

Carmella thereupon hopped into the front seat, beside the driver. She knew well enough that there would be no conversation between Mr. Hastings and her father. And—hurrah!—so far as she could see she had escaped discovery as a traitor to an interpreter's implied oath.

On the drive into town she chatted comfortably with Dixon, about his opinions of real estate, the probable future of the city, the opportunities of the con-

tracting business, and didn't he simply love the movies?

Halfway from the city limits to the business center they sighted a taxi standing idle.

"Out here, Dixon!" said Mr. Hastings, fiercely.

Dixon drove to the curbing, stepped out and opened the door.

"You'll hear from this," Mr. Hastings said, as he stepped out.

"Thank you, sir," said Dixon, grinning.

Then, with joy in his job, he drove Carmella to the Central Trust Company, where Tommaso had a slender commercial account. There Carmella satisfied herself by seeing that the certified check was accepted as readily as gold certificates.

She noted, also, the quick appraising approval with which the receiving teller had glanced at her father as he saw the amount and signature. Carmella had long suspected that money bought approval in this world of hers.

Dixon drove them back to Doty Street. On the way, Carmella asked Tommaso how much he had paid for the land.

"Five hundred for option and first payment," he replied.

"Yes, but in all," she insisted.

"Five hundred more. One thousand in all."

"*Per Dio!*" exclaimed Carmella, swearing strongly.

"Then you made seven thousand dollars on this deal?"

"Yes!"

They rode in silence for a few minutes. Then Carmella asked:

"However did you come to buy there, dad?"

"Mike Laudini told me it was good to buy there."

"Mike Laudini! The bootlegger!"

"Yes!"

Carmella gasped. She knew that Mike's customers were many and prominent. It had not occurred to her that he might pick up valuable information from them. That it was sometimes their way of tipping a man who was above other methods. She observed that Dixon was chuckling.

As they left the car, in front of the yellow cottage, Carmella turned to Dixon.

"Thank you, Mr. Dixon, for telling me about the check, and for taking us to the bank, and for bringing us home."

"Madam's orders," he said, grinning.

"And I hope this Hastings man don't make trouble for you," she added.

"Don't worry, kid! He don't make trouble. He don't dare. He don't dare to do anything. He didn't dare take the tip about Greendale land that your father did. He's a zero. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Mr. Dixon!"

And Carmella turned to run into the house with her father.

She noticed that he said nothing to Maria about the morning's work. She wondered if he never reported his business successes to her mother.

Just before the family sat down to a late dinner of meat balls with red wine he handed Carmella a ten-dollar bill, without saying why. It was the largest sum he had ever given her, for her own. There was no chance to do more than whisper her "thank you," but she beamed at him across the table, so that he understood.

After dinner she went to the sitting-room table, which was the family desk, and wrote the following note:

"Miss Kelly, Teacher—

"Please excuse Carmella for not going to school today. I used her for to interpret."

"Come here and sign this, dad!" she called.

Tommaso looked at the message and asked Carmella to read it in his own tongue.

"It's just an excuse for not being in school this morning," she explained, and translated it literally. "You have to sign it, you know."

Laboriously Tommaso signed his name.

It was natural for Carmella to ask her father to sign the note. He was the one who had kept her out of school. Yet, curiously, this was the first time that she had not had her mother furnish the excuses.

HE HANDED CARMELLA A TEN-DOLLAR BILL, WITHOUT SAYING WHY

Chapter Ten

"YES!" SAID CARMELLA

RICH beyond experience with her ten-dollar bill, Carmella was folding her written excuse for absence and preparing to hurry to the afternoon session of school when a whistle sounded outside. It was the code that she and Nicolo Pieri had arranged, and she jumped to the door. Nicolo stood in her gateway, lighting a cigarette.

"Hello, kid!" he said gruffly. "Dated up with any of your flossy friends for this afternoon?"

"Got to go to school," she said. "I was out this morning, interpreting for dad."

"School!" said Nicolo contemptuously. "That's for when you ain't got any other place to go. Listen, kid! I got two dollars to spend. Let's do the movies, and a dance place and a coupla sodas. How about it?"

A few hours ago two dollars for an afternoon's spending would have dazzled Carmella. But with ten dollars of her own in her tiny purse, to do with as she wished, the effect that Nicolo had expected was not quite achieved. She did not mention the ten dollars, however.

"Gosh, I've got to go to school some, haven't I? I'll get the dickens from dad if I get reported."

"Old Carroll never'll report you. I know him. Hell! I used to get away with two days a week the year before I was sixteen. Besides, you don't let your old man use the rough stuff any more, do you?"

"When my dad starts to lick you bet you stand for it—a lot of it. Of course, I don't let mother lick me any more."

"All applesauce!" said Nicolo. "My mother she ain't tried to touch me since dad got killed. She's got old country ideas, m' mother has, but she knows enough not to try 'em on me."

"But you're sixteen," said Carmella, with some slight tone of awe in her voice.

"Well, you're thirteen, ain't you? And you do your dad's interpreting. What's the big idea? Afraid to sign up with John Hancock and all them independence guys?"

"I'm as independent as you are," cried Carmella hotly. "And I'll be a damn sight more independent than you when I'm sixteen."

"L-i-k-e hell!" said Nicolo, drawling the "like" in the way which is peculiarly maddening to second generations.

"Are you gonna go with me or are you gonna stick with teacher?" he added tauntingly. "Remember, I got two passports in my pockets."

"Say," asked Carmella, "where'd you get your little

old two doodles? You haven't had as much solid wealth as that since you were christened—not to spend in one afternoon, anyway."

"I gotta job now."

"A job! What at?"

"I'm workin' regular for Mike now."

"For Mike Laudini?"

Nicolo nodded, noting the impression he had made.

"*Secante!*" exclaimed Carmella, and then, as if that did not quite fill the needs of the occasion, she added: "*Per la madonna!*"

Fascinated, she gazed at her newly crowned friend. She knew that he had been occasionally employed by Mike—errands and such trifles. But to be regularly employed, and learning the mysteries of bootlegging—here was honor. She could hardly believe that she had known him when he was only a slouchy boy.

Nicolo tossed his cigarette into the roadway with nonchalance, and lit another, striking the match with an air. It was his moment of glory.

"Let's go to the movies, Nick," said the girl.

"Sure you ain't got to go to school and kiss the teacher?" he asked.

For answer Carmella swung wide and hard at the boy's face, a blow which he easily sidestepped. They both laughed.

"What you doing for Mike?" she asked, as they started down the street, toward the school building and toward the theater.

"Well, I'm helping him make his vermouth and gin, so far," answered Nicolo. "But he's going to put me on deliveries in a few days."

Carmella gazed in rapture. Making deliveries, she knew, was the last word in bootlegging honors. It put you in touch with people, real people, big people, people like Mr. Barrington. You got tips on where to buy real estate. As for the mixing, it was a matter of pride to Doty Street that Mike had so many vermouth customers. That meant, of course, that they served cocktails for dinner—real cocktails, not the denatured kind. Not every bootlegger in Little Italy had customers for vermouth.

They went to two movies, with a soda after each, and then to a dance hall. Carmella was an instinctive dancer, with all the feeling for rhythm and the sense of lying back on the music, as on a cloud, that dancing can mean. Nicolo had to count his steps, sometimes audibly. Mostly he preferred to do a corner foxtrot, scarcely moving beyond the confines of a square yard. Carmella loved the gliding long-step movement about the floor.

Once a patron tipped the orchestra leader to play a waltz. He played it very badly, of course, as modern orchestras do, and was in desperate need of a metronome. But still it was a waltz. Nicolo tried it in terms of the foxtrot, and stumbled. Carmella, who had never danced a waltz before, stopped short and absorbed the rhythm. Suddenly she seized Nicolo, and

led him through the dance as if she had been a dancing-school pupil in the nineties.

"What the hell!" growled Nicolo. "That ain't no dance."

"It's a grand and glorious dance," said Carmella, "and I wish they'd play it again."

Carmella grew up as for the first time she danced the waltz. As the music slowed down and drawled itself to a close, which is the way with modern orchestras, Carmella applauded frantically. Nicolo stood quietly.

"Clap, you boob!" cried Carmella.

"Aw, that was dumb stuff," he answered.

"That," said Carmella, "was dancing. None of this shuffle stuff. I didn't know they made music that way. Go up and ask the leader to do it again."

"Aw!" said Nicolo.

"I mean it. I gotta dance that dance some more. You go up and ask him to repeat or I'm off you. And that ain't maybe."

Nicolo looked Carmella in the eye and saw that she meant it. He shuffled slowly toward the orchestra, spoke a moment with the leader, and returned.

"He says he can't do it more'n once an afternoon," Nicolo reported.

"Well, for the love of glory, didn't you tip him?" asked Carmella.

"Tip him? What with? I only had two dollars. I got twenty cents left."

"Listen, Nick!" Carmella led him to one side of

the dance hall. "I simply gotta dance that again." She took out her purse and handed him the ten-dollar bill her father had given her.

"Listen!" she repeated. "You go on out to the candy counter and get me some gum. Five cents' worth. That'll give you a bunch of bills. Make 'em give you a two-spot. That'll be enough. Then you'll walk up to that orchestra and slip the two-spot to the leader and tell him to play that dance again. I simply have got to do it."

Carmella drawled the last sentence like a society leader.

Nicolo stared.

"Where'd you get this money?" he asked.

"Never you mind," she answered. "Maybe I'm making money faster than you. You do what I say."

She sat down while Nicolo walked to the foyer, bought the gum, and got his change. The attendant gave him a five-dollar bill and four ones, besides the silver. Nicolo passed back two ones.

"Give me a two-spot for that," he said.

"Reckon you ain't superstitious," said the attendant, making the exchange. "Most of our customers won't take a two-spot."

"Neither would I, except for something special," answered Nicolo.

He showed the bill to Carmella, as he gave her back her money.

"That's great," she said. "Now do your stuff."

The orchestra was playing at the time, so that Nicolo waited. When the dance ended, he shuffled forward again, though with more confidence in his gait this time. To the leader he said, holding out the bill.

"Listen, brother, I gotta young dame here that's simply gotta have that dance again. Here's something for ya to do it again."

He turned and walked back. As he reached Carmella's side the orchestra began again the opening notes of the Campus Dreams waltz.

Carmella jumped to her feet with a cry of delight.

"You did it! You did it!" she exclaimed.

"Two dollars did it," said Nicolo.

Again Carmella directed Nicolo's awkward feet through the steps of the greatest of college waltzes. And again she grew up.

"That's dancing!" Carmella repeated, as the waltz came to an end.

"Aw, the heck!" said Nicolo.

As they walked home, chattering, Carmella was reflecting on the mental standing of a boy who preferred a foxtrot to a waltz. By the time they reached Doty Street, she had decided that his standing was low.

The next morning, on reaching school, she offered her excuse for the absence of the day before. It had occurred to her that, with rare foresight, she had written "today" instead of "this morning." And her father

had signed it. Her absence of the afternoon was fully covered.

Mr. Carroll, the principal, often sent word to the homes of his pupils that his Carmellas and Salvatores and Marys and Angelos must not be kept out of school too often. And as often as he sent them he knew they would do no good.

The chief business of the oldest child in the families from which his pupils came was to be interpreter. What he and his staff could teach them between times was clear gain for America. Perhaps! Mr. Carroll hoped so.

Rarely, indeed, did he report cases to the Attendance Department, which within a year or so had succeeded the old-fashioned truant officer. He knew how easily an unwilling child could refuse to learn. And, as he talked the problem over with Mrs. Carroll in the evenings, he wondered if they did not learn more as masterful interpreters than as submissive pupils.

Mr. Carroll had occupied himself more with the humanity that each term spread before him than with winning a Ph.D. based on the number of commas in a classic.

Carmella handed the excuse to Miss Kelly.

Miss Kelly scolded her and sent her to the principal. Carmella was growing entirely too free-and-easy in her absences.

"I want you to see Mr. Carroll about this," said Miss Kelly.

"Yes, Miss Kelly!" said Carmella.

Mr. Carroll read the excuse. Then he looked through his glasses at Carmella. He had decided to probe some of these facile documents.

"Why were you translating?" he asked.

"Because dad can't talk English enough to do business," said the girl.

"What was the business?"

"Selling real estate out in Greendale."

"What time of day did the transaction take place?"

"We left the city at eleven-thirty," answered Carmella.

"Then why"—Mr. Carroll was suddenly stern—"didn't you come to school for the first two hours?"

"Because you'd have made a row over my getting excused at eleven, and you know it, Mr. Carroll."

The surprised principal took off his reading glasses and stared at Carmella.

"You know it," she repeated.

"Are you sure I would?" he asked.

"Well, Miss Kelly would, anyway. And I simply had to be there, Mr. Carroll. You don't know ——"

"I know," he said reassuringly. "But you've been away a good deal this term."

"Have I, Mr. Carroll?" she asked.

For answer he turned to a card index. Gravely he read to her the dates on which she had been absent. There were more than Carmella remembered.

"Well, gosh, Mr. Carroll," she said, "when your

dad and your mother tell you they got to use you, what are you going to do?"

"When they tell you to do a thing, do it," said the principal. "But I wish you would tell them that your main job is to come to school. They can keep you out now and then, but not as much as this record shows. Will you tell them?"

"Yes, Mr. Carroll," said Carmella.

"And will you be at school every day except when they need you, instead of going to the movies as you did yesterday afternoon with Nicolo Pieri?"

Carmella's jaw dropped, and she stared at the principal, trying to think who could have been the traitor.

"What do you mean, Mr. Carroll?" she asked.

"I mean, will you come to school instead of going to the movies?" he replied.

"Yes, Mr. Carroll," said Carmella.

She walked back to her room, thinking furiously who could have told on her.

"Mr. Carroll sent me back," she told Miss Kelly.

"And are you coming to school every day?" asked Miss Kelly.

"Every day that Mr. Carroll won't take an excuse for."

"But you'll try to come regularly?"

"Yes, Miss Kelly," said Carmella.

Chapter Eleven

AN INVITATION DECLINED

NOW Carmella looked forward to a happy summer of movies and dances with Nicolo. She had "passed" the seventh grade tests and said good-bye to Miss Kelly. For nearly three months there lay ahead of her nothing but play, much of which she was decided should be at the jobs where her father was at work. In the fall she would be a senior in grammar school, which was a pleasant thing to look forward to. A sense of command went with it. But for the present, vacation.

She had intended to sleep late next morning, and browse in the kitchen for breakfast. But that night she forgot to change the schedule of her alarm clock, so that on vacation's first day it rang at the usual hour. Carmella was up before she realized the mistake, and although the notion of going back to bed occurred to her, she heard Raffaela and Paola dressing frantically. She remembered their recent combined attack on her, and decided to begin the day.

Tommaso had left when the trio came down to breakfast. As they finished their meal, Maria said:

"Now that you have no school, you shall wash the

dishes, Carmella, and you, Raffaela, shall dry them, and Paola shall help put them away."

The younger children promptly began to complain, more or less inarticulately. Carmella glared at her mother for a moment. Then she said:

"If I must work, I'm going to help father."

For an instant Maria hesitated, half afraid to join the issue. Then she reflected that if Tommaso had talked with Carmella about vacation work, the girl would have quoted him, instead of using an "if."

"We shall see," she said, and went about other matters.

Nothing more was said about dishes, but Carmella, pretending to read, noticed with growing inquietude that they were left untouched on the table. She started to play the phonograph, but remembered that Enrico was taking his morning nap. Her two sisters went outdoors to play, but some vague fear of inviting a crisis kept Carmella from joining them.

Several times Maria passed through the room, but said nothing. She had recalled that Tommaso was working on a nearby job, so that he would be at home for dinner soon after noon. This was an item that Carmella had forgotten.

But as dinner time approached, and Maria began the cooking, still without touching the breakfast dishes on the table, the girl grew more and more restless. She was debating surrender when the door opened and her father entered. Carmella stopped breathing. She

TO THE VAST DELIGHT OF HER YOUNGER SISTERS, CARMELLA TOILED AT THE BREAKFAST DISHES

watched him go through to the kitchen, and glance in surprise at the table. Maria turned to him.

"Do you need Carmella's help today in your work?" she asked.

"Of course not," he answered. "Why?"

"It is *la vacanza.*"

Tommaso waited.

"She is thirteen years old," Maria went on. "It is time she learned really to help, and in vacation I have told her to wash the dishes. She replies to me that she will work with you instead of with me."

Maria pointed to the unwashed dishes with a gesture to indicate that she had left the matter to her lord and master to judge. Tommaso turned to his daughter.

"It is vacation?" he asked.

"*Si, padre.*"

"You have not helped your mother so much because you go to school. When I was thirteen I worked all day. This vacation you shall wash dishes when your mother says so."

"But, *padre caro* ——"

"You shall wash dishes. These dishes here you shall wash before you eat dinner."

To the vast delight of her younger sisters, Carmella toiled at the breakfast dishes, washing and wiping them, while they enjoyed dinner with Tommaso and Maria.

At last, to Maria, this new world was proving to have a few old world customs.

Carmella finished her work as the family dinner ended, and sat down to eat, though so consumed with anger and mortification that she had appetite for little. As she finished, Maria said:

"Now you shall wash dishes, Carmella, and Raffaela shall wipe, and Paola shall help to put them away."

The three children set to work without reply, the two younger girls awed by the event of the morning. Not before had they seen Carmella so humbled. Once, when Maria was out of the room, she cuffed them both.

"You do that again and I'll tell dad when he comes home tonight," threatened Raffaela.

And thus a new restraint was thrown on Carmella. Hitherto both of them had endured her dominance.

Not until late in the afternoon did her wrath cool sufficiently to allow her to consider anew her vacation plans, and to consider Nicolo's new phase. As an assistant to Mike Laudini he should have money—much money. Hitherto he had been able to ask her to the movies only infrequently. Sometimes, when she happened to have money and he did not, she had cheerfully paid the bills. But now, she felt, this would no longer be proper.

Nicolo Pieri, assistant to Mike Laudini, was a figure.

Carmella, looking swiftly ahead, saw him destined to be a social as well as a financial person of eminence. Mike conducted an intricate and highly confidential business, and it was a matter of common knowledge

in Doty Street that he had as customers some of the city's leading citizens.

It was rumored that the president of the powerful trust company where Mike did his banking was a regular buyer of several cases a month of varied liquors, being a lavish entertainer. In this same trust company Mr. Barrington was a director.

It was obvious that a notable man like Mike would pick for assistant a boy whose abilities he rated high.

Carmella strolled to the street, still occupied with these thoughts. Nicolo presently swaggered out of his house.

"How come, kid?" he asked.

"Right as oh-so," said Carmella. And after a moment she added:

"Like to ask me to a movie again?"

"Yeh!" he admitted.

"If you're broke, I'll ask you."

"Broke be damned! You don't get it, kid, that I gotta job now, and I'm hipped for time. I gotta work."

"Then we've got to plan," said Carmella. "I have to wash dishes this vake. Dad said so. You got to make booze and all that. When do we get together?"

"Tonight, if you're game," said Nicolo.

"Sure thing!" said Carmella. "I'll go with you tonight. Dad won't kick on one night."

That evening, after supper, she asked him if she

might go to the movies. To her delight, he assented. But he added:

"I will take you. You shall read to me the titles, because they are hard for me in English."

"But, father!" she protested. "You never took me in your life before. I asked because Nicolo asked me. Let me go with him tonight, and you take me some other night."

"Nicolo Pieri, across the street?"

"Sure! Nick!"

"I have told you once that I did not wish you to go anywhere with that boy."

"But, father, he's all right. Mike Laudini has engaged him as regular assistant. Mike wouldn't engage anybody that wasn't all right. Please, just this one evening, anyway."

"I myself will go with you."

"But, *noioso*, dad ——"

"You shall not go to the theater with Nicolo," Tommaso interrupted. "He is not fit for you."

"But, *padre mio*, he's taken me lots of times, afternoons. And you say it is all right for me to go tonight, because you'd take me. Why can't Nicolo?"

"Listen, Carmella *mia*. I see much of men. I hear much of men. I hear of Nicolo. You are to go to the pictures with others, if you wish, but not with Nicolo. I will take you tonight, and you shall read the titles to me. Will you go with me?"

It was the first time Tommaso had ever invited, in-

stead of commanded, his daughter. For a moment she eyed him, undecided. Then suddenly the defeats and disappointments of the whole day swept over her, and she stormed. Stormed and raged, stamping her feet and screaming.

"No!" she shouted. "No, no, no! I will not go with you. I will go with Nick or I will not go at all. I am old enough to decide. I am old enough. Me, Carmella Kate, to be told like a baby. And you—you to talk so to me. You—a foreigner! You old—you —you wop!"

Carmella turned and rushed upstairs to her room.

Tommaso, making no reply, sat silent, smoking.

Saying nothing, though his eyes twitched queerly, as he saw his daughter turn up the stairs instead of dashing outdoors.

Saying nothing when Maria told him to come to bed.

Late into the night he sat, silently smoking.

Gradually his lips tightened on the amber stem of his pipe. Carmella, his chief pride in life, his hope for all the future, his link between old tongues and new ways—Carmella—she—*Madre di Dio!*—this idol of his heart had scorned him.

Suddenly he laughed aloud. The girl had not rushed from the house, as for an instant he had thought she would. She had not defied him by going out with Nicolo. Aha—ah-h-h! But the more he meditated the more he wished she had done it. He could have

punished her for that. He was still father of the family. By God, yes!

But this—this insult—the venom of her voice as she called him a "wop"—this new world venom that he did not understand—was ever there before an Italian child who had called a parent by that hated name?—he could not punish for that. To punish would admit his own defeat. Dimly he felt that the father should be bigger than the child in heart and mind, as well as in strength.

No punishment for the child. But punishment still came surely. Punishment came to those who were of the old régime.

The clock on the mantel struck twelve. Tommaso rose heavily, looked toward his bedroom, shook his head, and walked toward the victrola. Through the records he looked, until he finally found a song from *Il Trovatore*. He put it in the machine, and found a new needle for the arm. Heavily he wound the machine, and put the needle a third of the way into the record. The beginning of the song he did not like. Then he moved the regulator to "loud" and started the mechanism.

He sat in his Morris chair and smoked and listened, fiercely.

Presently Maria came to the door of their bedroom, off the sitting room.

"Turn off the machine, for God's sake, and for the children's," she pleaded.

"What th' hell!" said Tommaso, speaking the phrase in English. "Here in America. I do what I damn like when I damn like."

"Carmella, she bothers you?" asked Maria, coming to him in her night robe.

"No!" he shouted, above the music

Maria sat in his lap.

"You wish Carmella to grow up a fine girl?" she asked.

"Yes!"

"You wish her to mind me?"

"I don't know. I don't know what I wish. Go to bed!"

Tommaso's voice showed the strain of his thoughts. Maria slipped from his knees and went back to bed.

Only when the song was ended and the needle had screeched over half an inch of disc did he shut off the machine.

Then Tommaso emptied his pipe and went to bed.

Through the night Maria heard him mutter in his sleep.

Chapter Twelve

CARMELLA DEALS IN FUTURES

CARMELLA also slept badly that night. Out of the incoherent thoughts of anger there finally emerged in her mind the firm determination to go to the movies with Nicolo, if his work would ever let him off in the afternoon.

After all, if he was to be an eminent man, then her father was wrong. Never was it wrong to be the friend of an eminent man, nor wrong even to be his wife.

Here, for once, Tommaso was wrong. It was her duty to guide the family in this, as she had in so many other things since she was ten or eleven.

She rolled and tossed. Once the wakeful Maria heard her cry out in her sleep, something that to her Italian ears sounded like "Attaboy, Nick." But Maria did not waken Tommaso.

In the morning Carmella slept until after her father had gone to work. Without complaint she washed the breakfast dishes, aided by her sisters. Once she cuffed Paola for almost dropping a cup.

"You don't dare do that to me," said Raffaela, "because I'll tell dad."

"I'll tell dad if you do it again," declared Paola loudly.

Carmella did not do it again. She planned to rebel on a large scale. It was just as well not to err in minor ways, which might complicate the situation.

When the dishes were done she hastily got her hat and slipped out of doors, saying nothing to her mother. She was hoping to encounter Nicolo.

In front of Mike Laudini's house she met him, smoking and lounging against the gateway. He sneered as she approached.

"Got kept in last night, after all!" he said.

"Yes, I did," said Carmella bluntly. "Dad was in a terrible temper. Wouldn't let me go out evenings except with him. So I didn't go.

"Are you as smart as you think you are?" she asked.

Nicolo shifted his weight from one foot to the other, and snarled:

"You sound like the whooping cough. Something's bit you."

"If you were as smart as you think you are," went on Carmella, "you'd think up some way to get off to a movie in the afternoon now and then."

"I'm working now," he answered. "Get that through your head."

"You look it," said Carmella, adding a phrase in Italian:

"*Ti è entrato in testa!*"

Which, being his own sneer turned into his own mother tongue, made him suddenly furious.

"You think you're mighty bright, don't you, dish-washer!"

"Most as bright as you, bottle-washer," she answered, shrewdly, guessing that preparing the bottles was part of his job.

"Say, kid!" he said. "You're damn uppy this morning. Did you get licked last night?"

"I did not get licked. But I got kept in. So now are you going to take me to the movies some afternoons, or do I go and get me a new feller?"

This was a new idea to Nicolo. He had regarded Carmella as his own for so long that he could imagine nothing else.

"Great Scott, kid!" he said. "Don't blow up like that. I gotta job, but there's evening work to it, sometimes. Like enough I can get off afternoons when I want to. Maybe this afternoon."

"That'd suit me," said Carmella. "I wash dishes for a while. Then I'll come out."

"Righto, kid! I'll ask Mike."

Having told Carmella that he was a regular, full-time employee of Mike he thought it best to stick to the lie and all the forms that followed.

Shortly before two o'clock that afternoon Carmella emerged, clad in the best of her frocks, except the white confirmation dress. Nicolo was again in front of Mike's house, smoking.

"So you made it while dad's away," he said.

"I made it, and where are we going?"

"They say there's a swell Western over at the Gaiety," suggested Nicolo.

"But there's a swell society comedy over to the Dante," said Carmella. "Let's go there."

"That's a punk place. Nobody goes there," said Nicolo.

"But if they have a good play, that's what we want to see. I don't go to look at the crowd. Let's go. I want to see Dolly Dutton—she's in it."

"Oh, all right!" agreed Nicolo, pretending vast weariness.

Carmella led him eagerly, with a swift pace that annoyed his shuffling gait. Still swiftly visioning the future, with Nicolo as a man of substance and affairs, she saw more clearly than ever before the need of educating him up to certain standards which he now lacked.

In the matter of movies, for instance. She hoped this summer to be able to lead him to new ideals of taste—away from the crime and adventure pictures which he now sought, up to, perhaps, even a liking for society drama. Costumes and furniture and manners in gorgeous quantities—these were the things that Carmella wanted on the screen. She followed with almost a fever of quick study those scenes where the modern social graces were most conspicuously emphasized.

The qualitative note had entered Carmella's study of America on the screen. She felt a new sense of discrimination. Every butler on the screen must measure up to or beyond the Barrington butler.

Every dining room was appraised in terms of the Barrington dining room.

Every host and hostess of the silver sheet was, in her mind, a competitor with Mr. and Mrs. Barrington.

Every chauffeur, too, was good or bad as he was above or below the form of Dixon.

Carmella had a feeling that in some way Dixon was not quite all that a chauffeur to the rich should be. Possibly he was too young, or possibly he was too companionable. She studied screen chauffeurs with particular intensity.

Where she detected false notes on the screen Carmella openly scoffed, to the annoyance of those in neighboring seats and the bewilderment of Nicolo.

"Where'd you get that stuff?" he asked gruffly, in the course of the afternoon's bill.

"Huh! Anybody knows that the butler serves the cocktails, not the cheap second maid," answered Carmella calmly. "And he uses a silver tray, not one of the enamel things."

"Where'd you get all that stuff?" he repeated.

"Aw, ask me! That stuff is lying around for anybody to get," she said. "You never saw a butler serve cocktails without he had a silver tray, did you?"

"Sure not, duchess!" said Nicolo mockingly. "And

they stuff the graft they get in their left hip pockets. The right-hand pocket for graft would be a terrible social error, countess. Get me, kid?"

Carmella gazed steadily at the screen, and kept silent.

To Nicolo, this was a new form of retort. He was not used to companions who did not chatter.

Bewildered, he blundered on:

"Gotta carry the gat on your right hip, ain't you? That's why."

Low hisses from nearby spectators made him realize that he had carried the conversation too far. Several turned in their seats and glared at him.

It annoyed Nicolo to discover, when he and Carmella argued at the theater, that he was always the one who achieved this rebuke. She seemed to have an instinct about the stopping point.

He slumped in his seat, while Carmella gazed steadily ahead, and gently tittered as a comedy scene was flashed.

Having missed the continuity, Nicolo sat sullen and watched Carmella, ignoring the picture. How come that she knew so much, this kid? How come that she always put him in the wrong and made him feel miserable over nothing at all?

The same thing happened whenever they went to the movies together—whenever they went anywhere, in fact. Even so simple a thing as drinking coca-cola in Raffaeli's drug store invariably revealed new airs in

Carmella, and new awkwardness of mind or hand in Nicolo.

Something was happening, but he could not explain it.

Something was happening to Carmella, like her latest trick of saying nothing and looking elsewhere when she was through with a quarrel. He could not understand it, and it irritated him. It was nothing, he knew, that Doty Street had taught her.

To Carmella, it was a new and secret triumph. Where she had learned it, she could not have told. Mrs. Barrington to Miss Sargle at the settlement house, perhaps. Perhaps out of the American ether.

There were a few such afternoons that summer, bitter and sweet by turns. But increasingly Nicolo found himself enmeshed in his business.

"Sorry we can't go," was Nicolo's usual greeting.

"But you need it," said Carmella.

"Need it? Hell!"

Afterwards Carmella realized that she had committed a tactical error when she told Nicolo that he needed anything.

He was of her own breed and generation.

She should have known better.

Chapter Thirteen

AN INVITATION SOUGHT

FOR some days Carmella eyed her father uneasily. Not since the day of the certified check had he mentioned his affairs to her. She could have wept for eagerness to know what he was doing, and for whom, and with whom.

She adopted the habit of rising in time for breakfast with him, for then, she knew, he was most likely to expand. But even here she failed. Suddenly, one morning, in the midst of her chatter about neighborhood affairs with her brother, Joe, she turned to her father and asked, in Italian:

"Are you a contractor, dad?"

He thought for a moment, looking at her solemnly.

"Not to speak of it," he said finally.

"Oh! But I told Mrs. Barrington that you were."

"Not yet," said Tommaso.

"Maybe, some day?"

"Maybe, some day."

"But I must tell Mrs. Barrington that I lied. I didn't mean to, but I did, I suppose."

Tommaso hesitated, slowly eating his breakfast, before he said:

"You need not tell Mrs. Barrington."

Carmella looked at her father shrewdly, and said no more. Some day, Tommaso felt, he would be a real contractor. Already he had a few men whom he could hire and with whom he worked when there was a small cellar to be dug. But he had not reached out for big jobs, because he lacked capital to finance workmen and equipment on jobs where his own pay must come after the completion of the work.

But now, with eight thousand dollars to his credit in the bank, he was beginning to think toward bigger things. Carmella's question had cut sharply into his thoughts on this very subject—thoughts that had begun the night he had sat while the victrola played a love song—the evening he had quarreled with his best-loved daughter.

Eight thousand dollars would finance what had before been impossible. His mind had wandered to Greendale again, for he knew there was to be action in that direction. Greendale fascinated him, moreover, for there alone he had realized the immigrant's dream of a fair land of quick wealth and no effort. He had wondered how his land had sold so easily and at so round a price. The lots he had bought for a possible future home, surrounded by grape arbors and with a shaded seat on the side of the house.

Of Carmella's part in it he had not dreamed. And after he had sold, he had heard nothing of the project. American papers he did not read; his Italian weekly

dealt with news from Rome under the new régime, and home matters like the building fund of the Sons of Italy. More of this than with new paving plans and new bus lines out of the city.

Even before Carmella asked about contracting, he had resolved to ask about Greendale. On leaving home that morning he encountered Mike Laudini, standing in front of his house down the street. Mike, he remembered, was the one who had suggested months ago that he buy land in Greendale. And Mr. Barrington, who had bought those same lots at an unimagined price, was known to be one of Mike's good customers.

He stopped and they exchanged greetings. Then he asked about the suburb

"They're building there—building like madmen," said Mike. "The Barrington crowd and the Cronin crowd, a mile beyond, are trying to beat each other into the market with houses. Why not step into it, Tomas?"

"Maybe," said Tommaso, moving on. He had learned what he chiefly cared to learn. He walked over to the trolley line and rode downtown, leaving the car within a block of the Central Trust Company, where Mr. Barrington had his offices. He had not yet formulated any clear idea of what he meant to do, as his steps unconsciously turned toward the Central Trust building.

Suddenly he heard himself hailed from the street,

and recognized Dixon's voice. The latter was sitting in the Barrington car, drawn up at the curb.

"Hello, Tommaso Coletta," Dixon called. "How's the real estate man?"

Tommaso did not wholly understand the English of the last sentence, but sensed the greeting.

"*Buong giorno!* How do?" he responded, in Italian and English.

"Two *buongs* and a *giorno* for me," said Dixon, cheerfully. "And how's Carmella Kid Kate?"

Tommaso caught a tone in the chauffeur's voice as he asked about Carmella which made him hesitate. Then he said, speaking English:

"Carmella fine! Greendale, how she?"

Dixon laughed, good-naturedly.

"Greendale, she fine too," he said. "Going down there with the boss pronto. The darn fool don't know I've parked here fifteen minutes overtime already. But he can afford the fine if anything happens. Besides, they don't often pinch a car with a driver in the seat."

"Yes," said Tommaso. "Mucha she build, Greendale?"

"Mucha she build you bet your sweet young building complex. Mucha she builda pronto."

"Chanca for work?"

Dixon looked intently at Carmella's father.

"Listen, old bird," he said. "Listen to me. Why in ——"

"No spika Eenglish. *Parlate Italiano?*"

"Not by a damn sight! No spika nix but American for mine. But listen, old man. Listen to me now. Barrington. Get that? Mucha builda house. Get that? Mucha digga cellar. Get that? Helluva hustle! You don't get that, but you ought to. Listen! Money! Get that? Lotta money for lotta hustle. You spika Barrington, you digga cellar, you getta money, mucha de mon. Get that?"

Tommaso nodded doubtfully. Still, in a way, he got the idea. Dixon was beginning to ask more about Carmella when Mr. Barrington puffed heavily toward the machine.

"To Greendale, quick!" he commanded, as Dixon opened the rear door of the sedan.

"Here's Mr. Coletta wants to speak to you, sir," said the chauffeur. "He's the man you bought those Greendale lots from at a hold-up, through his kid. He's a contractor, sir. He can hustle. Great reputation in Little It."

"No time for nonsense," said Mr. Barrington, jumping into the car and settling into the corner. His hand was shaking as he drew a cigar from his pocket and lit it. "Strike down the line. Damn wops raising hell. Get me to Greendale quick!"

"Yes, sir! Break the record, sir! But if you've got a strike, Mr. Barrington, this man here might be good. He's non-union, and he works with his men. He was on his way to see you when I flagged him. He'll turn you out cellars clean and quick. He's sure-fire!"

Mr. Barrington turned and regarded Tommaso. The latter, with an instinct that might have been inherited from his daughter, had lighted a cigarette and was regarding the architecture of nearby buildings. He did not know what Dixon was saying, but with the canny receptivity of the alien he was guiding his ideas by the tone of voice and such few words as he caught. Dixon, having finished his testimonial, shivered and hoped to high heaven that there was a foundation for it.

Mr. Barrington opened the door and leaned out.

"Hello, Mr. Coletta," he said. "My chauffeur here tells me you're a wiz at getting cellars dug. Hop in and drive out to Greendale with me and talk it over."

Tommaso, understanding the one word "Greendale," hesitated.

"Get in, you dummy," said Dixon. "In! Get me? Talk digga cellar. Get me?"

He half pulled Tommaso into the car beside Mr. Barrington, slammed the door, and jumped back into his driver's seat. Dodging traffic and watching signals, he kept an ear turned back.

"Now see here," began Mr. Barrington. "My chauffeur tells me you can dig cellars. Can you bust a strike? Can you dig cellars with non-union diggers? Can you slam into a job and pull it through double-quick, regardless of damn Bolsheviks and strikers? How about it? How about it in dollars and cents?"

"*Non parlo Inglese!*" said Tommaso mildly.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Barrington," said Dixon, keeping his eyes ahead and throwing his voice back. "This bird is good, but he don't know it. And he has to do his stuff in dago talk. Why not let him get an interpreter? He's got that kid girl that was over at your house for lunch a while ago, and sold you his lots. Ask him to get her aboard and see what you can do about this strike thing, why don't you?"

"All right, Dixon," said his employer. "I approve the idea. But can you jabber with him enough to get it across?"

"I can't talk to him, but I can make him understand ideas of one syllable," said Dixon. And then, to Tommaso, he said:

"Greendale! Mucha digga! Mucha da money! But—mucha to talk! Get Kid Kate—Carmella. She talk. She talk ——"

"*Agevolmente*," said Tommaso.

"Whatever that means, yes! She help getta da money. Get me?"

"Carmella, you say?"

"Sure! Carmella. Kid Kate. She talk. Get her."

They rode a few blocks while Tommaso thought. Finally he said:

"He weesh talk?"

"He sure does," said Dixon. "And Kid Kate—Carmella—will help you maka da mon."

"He weesh talk?" repeated Tommaso, pointing to Mr. Barrington.

"He sure does," answered Dixon, guiding the car skillfully through the heavy downtown traffic. Tommaso looked toward Mr. Barrington, and the latter nodded.

"Money. Dig. Talk first," he said, taking quick note of Dixon's method of international speech.

"Doty Street," said Tommaso. "I get for talk."

Dixon turned the machine toward Little Italy without orders from his employer, and presently slowed down and stopped in front of the yellow cottage. But Tommaso, instead of going into his own house, hurried to the door of his next neighbor, Mrs. Alibrio. Dixon and his employer saw the two in earnest conversation at the door. Then the woman disappeared, and Tommaso returned to the car.

"She come queeck. She talk." To Dixon his voice seemed unnatural, as if he had just emerged from his first trip in an airplane. Or as if, perhaps, he had undergone a queer social adventure. Dixon wondered that he had not sought Carmella. But his thoughts were interrupted by Mr. Barrington's attitude.

"Tell her to be quick!" he growled.

Tommaso turned on him abruptly.

"She queeck if she want. If she not queeck, we wait."

Dixon glanced covertly at his employer. The glance convinced him that he was not discharged on the spot, although the Barrington smile had turned into a scowl. Dixon turned then to Tommaso.

"Not Kid Kate?" he asked, looking for an explanation.

"No spika Eenglish," said the father calmly.

Dixon realized that he had been shut out of a fact.

Presently Mrs. Alibrio appeared, resplendant in red and yellow and navy blue.

The drive to Greendale was made without conversation, except as Tommaso and Mrs. Alibrio exchanged an occasional brief phrase in Italian. Arrived at the place, Mr. Barrington showed Tommaso the condition of the enterprise, the points where haste was most necessary, and outlined the terms he was willing to give. He even had the machine driven to the rival development down the road, in order that he might study the nature of the competition.

Mrs. Alibrio interpreted quietly and without color. Occasionally she did not know one of Mr. Barrington's words, in which case she asked him to simplify. He was finding this hard to do, because his anger was mounting as he saw the steady digging on the rival project, and as Tommaso's deliberate manner continued.

At last, after much conversation that Mr. Barrington counted needless, the afternoon saw a preliminary agreement drawn up. Tommaso promised to provide a gang that would dig cellars at a rate unprecedented in Greendale. For speed he was to have a bonus large enough to divide with his men. And then the Bar-

rington car took Tommaso and Mrs. Alibrio back to Doty Street.

Little Italy's gossip is neither quicker nor harsher nor more daring than any other gossip in the world. It is merely just as much so. By supper time Carmella, coming home from an afternoon with a friend, knew from half a dozen eager informers that Mrs. Alibrio had been taken by her father as interpreter on a business deal. In vacation, too, when she was not in school. When, in fact, she was just around the corner.

Mrs. Alibrio had been taken as interpreter on a business deal. Carmella's head rang with the words. Mrs. Alibrio! Interpreter! Mrs. Alibrio! Good God-and-all!

The girl thought furiously. For a few minutes she was dazed. Then, sitting back in the Morris chair and closing her eyes, she thought it through. Aha! Her father was disciplining her. He had sensed her pride in his work and in her occasional part of it. So he had deliberately cut her out of it. Ah! He was a shrewd man, her father. But she would show him.

Carefully she was out of the house when Tommaso came home that afternoon. But, following him in after a few minutes, she went directly to him.

"Are you tired tonight, dad?" she asked in Italian.

"A little," he answered. "But not so much as some days. Why, *piccola ragazza?*"

"Because, papa, I so much want to go to the movies

THE GIRL THOUGHT FURIOUSLY

tonight, and I want *you* to take me. Will you take me to the new Western picture at the Gaiety?"

Tommaso was surprised. And, unfamiliar with feminine indirections, he was secretly pleased.

"Maybe, after supper," he said.

And after supper he did.

Chapter Fourteen

OFFICIAL AND FORMAL

"AND listen, *caro padre!*" exclaimed Carmella as they walked home from the theater. "I am your interpreter, is it not so?"

In the picture house she had been smilingly affectionate as she translated the titles into Italian and whispered them to him. In some of the interludes, when there was time to talk, she had laughingly added her own name to the list of film credits: "Carmella Coletta, official interpreter."

And Tommaso had smiled in return. He had forgotten, in the hurry and worry of recent days, that his oldest daughter could be so—so—he could not think of the word. Not since the days in Italy when he was making love to Maria had he needed the word. She was—well, even as Maria her mother had been, but with a strange added new world assurance and boldness. *Bella Carmella!*

Suddenly it occurred to him to wonder if ever before she had been so completely captivating—so much to be proud of. He had taken her day-by-day development as a matter of course, hardly noticing the changes. But now there had been a break between them—slight,

but tense with the purpose to command. And this slight break had given him new eyes through which to view his child.

"Carmella Coletta, official interpreter."

The phrase rang in his ears. How she had grown since—well, since he had last appraised her at all. Almost as if she were no longer his daughter—a child of Italy. Was it true, perhaps, that here by his side she was interpreting America, instead of florid screen titles, to him? She seemed to sense the spirit of the new country. Whereas he, Tommaso, sensed only certain opportunities for making money from its people. They were not his people. Were they Carmella's people?

As they left the theater and waited to cross the traffic-filled street she took his arm with a comforting air of dependence. That was as Maria had done in Italy, even though traffic gave small excuse for it there.

"Didn't you like it better because I was with you to translate the titles?" she asked.

"Of course," he admitted gruffly. "Why don't they print them in our tongue, anyway?"

"Ah," said Carmella, "because so many young folks go, who read English better than they read Italian. But always I can interpret to you, *padre*."

Tommaso grunted what might have been a "yes" or a "no."

"And listen, *caro padre*, I am your interpreter, is it not so?"

Suddenly, without waiting for an answer, she began to chatter. Chattering of the pictures they had seen, of her vacation play, of the new teacher she was to have in the fall, and of the rumor that he was to be contractor for Mr. Barrington.

"Only for the cellars, to hurry them along," said Tommaso, anxious not to overestimate his good fortune, or to try to deceive his daughter in any way. "There is a strike, and I shall take a few men out to do the digging."

"Aha! Then that makes you a contractor. I told the truth. I told the truth to Mrs. Barrington!" She skipped a few steps ahead, then backstepped to her father's side and took his arm again. "That makes you a contractor. Tommaso Coletta, contractor!" She laughed joyously.

Tommaso looked keenly at her, as he had in the theater. This again was a new tone. Dependent, approving, dominating—his daughter. His American daughter. He sighed. It was beyond his experience.

"But, dad," she went on, "a contractor must provide for his men, is it not? And he must take them to their work in the morning and back home at night. And to haul out the earth—there should be a truck for that. No longer are you digging one little cellar. You agree to do a big job, and do it quick. You must have the

"AND LISTEN, *caro padre*, I AM YOUR INTERPRETER. IS IT NOT SO?"

things—the machinery—as well as the men. And I am your interpreter in these things."

Tommaso slowed his steps as the vision of new and bigger enterprise built itself up in his mind. To gain time, he answered the last question first.

"No need of an interpreter, *piccola ragazza*, for I shall have countrymen to work with me."

"Quite true, papa! For the real digging, yes! But for buying tools and trucks."

"I will hire a truck from Luigi Domao. He has one, and it will do to begin with. The cellars are to be small."

"But for tools and a truck for going and coming. Mr. Barrington likes quick work and clean. He will be there Monday to watch. You are a big contractor, *carissimo padre*. But you will be big the quicker if you please Mr. Barrington the very first day."

Tommaso hesitated. But Carmella, her hand on his arm, felt in his muscles that he was yielding. He was remembering his new employer's insistence on speed. And so they entered the yellow cottage home.

"Good night, dad!" said Carmella, in English.

"Good night!" he replied, in the same language.

In bed, she thought over the problem she had faced and the way in which she had met it. Her father had punished her in a new and unexpected way. Once he had used a strap. Today he had merely left her out. It had bewildered her. But she had given no sign, she thought, that she was hurt and penitent.

She chuckled to think that at no moment of the evening had she been weak enough to mention Mrs. Alibrio's name. But she fell asleep knowing that she should always, always hate Mrs. Alibrio.

Tommaso, too, thought long before he slept. Carmella had scored when she pointed out factors that he had overlooked. Mr. Barrington wanted action—prompt and fast. He, Tommaso, had thought of it in terms of man-power, and of that he was sure. But the equipment he had overlooked. Tomorrow was Sunday. He could do much before Monday morning, with eight thousand dollars in the bank, and Carmella to help.

But Carmella! Should he call on her? He had resolved to ignore her for a week or two. Yet tonight she had been most devoted. She had been, in fact, fascinating. Perhaps he had wronged her by leaving her out. Maria, her mother, he loved. At least he had loved her in Italy. Since coming to this new country he had been almost too busy to love. But Maria, even in her youth, had never been like that.

What a wife Carmella would be for some nice young Italian boy! He fell asleep.

Through all the Sunday that followed Tommaso was busy, arranging for workers and equipment and for Luigi's truck, with Luigi to drive. He dealt with his own people, and Carmella languished for interpreting to do.

Nicolo called from across the street, and asked her to

go to the afternoon movies. Her abrupt refusal left him in new doubt as to his position in her favor.

"Dad may need me," she explained.

"*Santo Dio!*" he sneered. But it was his only attempt at repartee.

As she prepared for bed that night Carmella held back the tears by the simple process of growing angry. There was no weeping in her program of wrath. Tommaso had not called on her all the long day.

"I wonder if all fathers are as hard to train," was her final thought. And she dreamed that she was standing on the top beam of a steel skyscraper frame, commanding her father and her brother Joe to bring bricks to her, quickly, so that she might throw them from twenty stories high at Mrs. Alibrio, who was passing on the sidewalk below.

Tommaso had gone to work when she appeared for breakfast the next morning.

"Did father ask for me?" she inquired.

"No. Why should he?" asked Maria.

"No reason. I just thought he might."

With heavy steps she started downstreet on an errand, after finishing the dishes. Nicolo hailed her from Mike Laudini's yard, but she barely answered.

"High hat as hell!" commented the boy to himself. "I think I get me another girl." But in his heart he knew he would not.

Tommaso, meanwhile, had been early on the job in Greendale, transporting his workers and their tools in

Luigi's truck, which was also to haul away the earth from their shovels. The men had demurred a little at riding in a truck used for hauling earth, but Tommaso's quick wrath had overawed them.

Like a general he disposed of his forces—just enough men in each of three cellars to keep the truck efficiently busy. To each group he explained that there was a bonus for speed. He explained that down the road was a gang of countrymen from Clayville, working on a rival project. Clayville was a suburban Italian colony, between which and the Doty Street region there was a deep and brooding hatred.

By eight o'clock the Barrington project was a scene of wholesome industry. At nine-thirty Mr. Barrington himself, accompanied by his sixteen-year-old son John, appeared. The latter should have been in the private summer school where he was enrolled in a maternal hope that he could make up the studies in which he had failed the past year. He preferred, however, to be with his father. And the latter, himself unschooled, had an idea that practical affairs were better training than the study of books.

"Going well, Tommaso?" asked Mr. Barrington.

"Go fine!" said the new contractor.

Just then a stranger approached Tommaso and asked:

"You got a license to set them wops on this job?"

"What the hell?" asked Tommaso, in English.

"You know you gotta file a bond with the building

inspector of this town before you can set a gang to work on contract stuff. We gotcha if you don't. You can't come out here and steal a job from a bunch of honest working men, and I'll land you in jail damn quick if you don't live up to specifications."

"No spika Eenglish," said Tommaso. "*Parlate Italiano?*"

"Not by a damn sight! And I wouldn't if I could. You're in America now, Tony. Get wise or get out. See?"

"Who are you?" demanded Mr. Barrington.

"No matter who I am. This fellow knows. He's the contractor here, and it's him I talk to."

"But ——" began Mr. Barrington, flushing with anger.

Dixon strolled to the scene.

"Better walk over to some other part of the works, sir," he said. "It'll only make matters worse if you butt in on it. I know his breed."

With an oath Mr. Barrington walked slowly away, although his son stood fascinated and listened.

Tommaso, unused to the ways of business agents, reflected. Either he must pay graft to somebody—he had learned enough of America to know that—or he must know exactly where he stood. He had not comprehended the words, but he knew their general import to be a hold-up of some sort. He turned to Dixon:

"For interpret. You can do?"

"Sure!" said Dixon. "I'll get one. Who you want?"

Tommaso looked blank.

Who—who—who? Carmella? Alibrio? Who?

Tommaso thought rapidly—more rapidly than he liked. Mrs. Alibrio? Carmella? Both could translate. Only one cared. And she had clung to his arm last evening.

"Carmella."

"She'll be here in thirty minutes," said Dixon, "or several traffic cops will be dead."

Turning to the business agent, he said:

"This man don't get your brand of talk. I'm going to get his interpreter. Back in thirty minutes. You wait. And the work goes on, see?"

The stranger demurred, and Dixon stepped toward him.

"I said the work goes on, and you stay here. If you start anything, remember, these huskies here follow the leader. See?"

He waved his hands toward the workmen, now leaning on their shovels and watching.

He dashed to the Barrington machine, without waiting to consult his employer, and drove off with all the acceleration a costly collection of eight cylinders can have. Carmella had returned to the cottage as Dixon drove up and came to a stop so sudden that it plowed up the macadam. She was just entering the door as Dixon called.

"Quick!" he cried. "Jump in."

The door of the machine had hardly closed when the car was bounding around the corner, heading back to Greendale.

"What's the rumpus?" she asked, after they had traveled a few blocks at a sinful rate of speed.

"Don't ask me. All I agreed to do was to get you there. All you have to do is to take it easy, work your head, translate, and bluff the guy."

A traffic officer signaled. Dixon swerved expertly to one side, and without slackening speed leaned out and shouted:

"Life or death! I'll be back."

Luckily Carmella was leaning forward, tense in thought. The officer saw her face, and forgot to take the machine's number. In slow reflection he decided that the chauffeur must have been right.

For some time they drove in silence. Then Carmella turned and gazed squarely at the driver.

"Tell me one thing!" she commanded. "Did dad try to get Mrs. Alibrio?"

"Not that I heard of. He got into a jam with this walking delegate. Some kind of a hold-up. But neither could understand the other. So your dad asked me to get you."

Carmella sighed happily, and sank back into the heavily cushioned seat.

Fifteen minutes brought them to the Greendale plat. Carmella jumped out and ran to her father.

Chapter Fifteen

LA PICCOLA PADRONA

"WHAT'S the matter, dad?" Carmella cried. "Need an official interpreter today?"

She laughed happily, but Tommaso's mood was stern. The unknown worried him. For answer he pointed to the business agent, who had been talking with a companion. Dixon noted with satisfaction that Tommaso's men were all at work.

Carmella walked sturdily to the agent.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm the English end of Coletta and Company," she said. "And any straight or crooked work you've got on hand can be delivered to me, here and now. See?"

"Well, say, kid, you don't have to start with your feet spread out like a sea-going admiral. All the matter is, your old man has got to have a bond."

"Who says so?"

"Why—uh!—I say so."

"And who in the holy hell are you, you moth-eaten shrimp?"

The agent flushed. He was slightly pockmarked, and below the average in size.

"Say," he answered, "are you trying to get me into an argument?"

"No! You don't know enough to argue. I'm trying to get you into a fight."

"But your old man ——"

"Forget my old man. I can lick you on brains, and my dad can lick you with his fists. If I say the word, he'll hand you to the undertaker, everything else but embalmed. Believe me, he can fight. Now what's the big kick all about? Is work here any business of yours, and if it is, what do I tell the cops?"

"Well, for gawd's sake! What kind of a nice little kid are you?" began the agent. "I was going to give you a doll next Christmas, but now ——"

"Now you know you were trying to swing a bluff on a man you thought was a poor ignitz dago. Now you know he's got friends. Two of my uncles are captains in the police department, and two of my cousins are champions of the world in their class. I can get all four here in a couple of hours. Now, do you beat it quick, or do I set my dad on you and call the coroner?"

Dixon, beside Carmella, was grinning. John Barrington had come close, and gazed in awe at the girl. Even Mr. Barrington had come within hearing distance. The agent hesitated, and Dixon slightly curled his right fist. The agent wilted.

"F'r the love of gawd, they're breeding wild-cats now," he said to his companion, as they walked to their machine.

Dixon followed them, strolling casually. As they got into the machine he said:

"Been near a year now since I had a real good fight. I was hoping you had more guts, so's to make it a match. From now on, mister, you're away from here. See?"

The agent scowled heavily, and made no reply.

Carmella turned to her father.

"That's that!" she said, in Italian. "Now if you keep your gang at work you'll save some money. And Mr. Barrington here will save some time."

Tommaso whirled on the three sets of workers, who were already bending to their shovels.

John Barrington came closer to Carmella.

"Gee, Miss Carmella," he said, "you're great! How'd you dare talk that way?"

"He's just a bluffer," said Carmella. "You've got to talk to him like that."

John, three years her senior, but slender and hesitant, like one whose decisions had always been made for him, gazed in continued admiration.

"But how," he persisted, "can you tell a bluffer from the real thing?"

"Mostly you just know it. Feel it, you know. I don't know how."

She returned his gaze, perplexed by his sudden interest. He went on:

"You know, Miss Carmella, that time you came to the house, I liked you."

"That's good!" she answered frankly. "I thought you acted bored."

"All the boys act bored," he said. "That's the way you have to act if you are anybody. But I wasn't—not a bit. You're—you're—well, sort of different, you know. Will you come for luncheon again some day?"

Carmella laughed, more in surprise than in amusement.

"That's up to your mother and my folks, whether they'd let me if she asked me."

"Wouldn't you like to come, if mother asks you?"

"I'd have to see about that if it happened, kiddo! Looks to me like your dad wants you."

Dixon approached from the direction of the machine, in which Mr. Barrington was already seated.

"Excuse me," he said, "but your father wants you, John. Didn't you hear me honking for you?"

"I did not, Dixon," said the boy, and Carmella's quick ears heard the difference in his tone from his hesitating talk with her. She glanced at Dixon, and noted a slight flush under the bronze of his face. And in this subtle change of a boy's voice she recognized another step in her education.

You commanded, it seemed, those whom you knew you could command. The trick seemed to consist in knowing whom. In her heart she felt that she knew better than did John. Dixon turned to Tommaso, standing near, and asked:

"Is the kid going home? She—home?" He pointed to Carmella.

"Not by a damn sight!" said the girl, speaking first. "I'm staying here with dad. If that man comes back, or anything else happens ——"

Her sentence trailed into silence, while Tommaso stood, perplexed.

"Better let her stay here, at least today," said Dixon. "She'll learn more in things like this than in a year of school."

"*Si?*" said Tommaso, understanding the idea if not the words. "You think—yes?"

"You bet!" said Dixon. "Let her stay."

"Sure I'll stay, dad, if you want me," said Carmella, in Italian. "I'm your official interpreter, you know. Maybe something else will happen."

"*Va bene!*" said Tommaso.

Carmella shuffled a jazz step in the dirt, in involuntary celebration of a wish come true.

Down in the partly excavated cellar of the bungalow nearest the main road, where the busses were to run, Salvatore exclaimed to his fellow workman Angelo:

"How does *la piccola padrona* boss the world!"

"*La piccola padrona* she is," said Angelino. "She is the little boss, and God help me if I ever cross her path."

Carmella, meanwhile, induced her father to walk

La piccola padrona

with her to the rival excavations down the road. She wanted to know the comparative standing of the two projects before she began to set a pace for Tommaso.

And Dixon, leading John back to the Barrington car, listened intently as father began to question son.

As he left Carmella, the boy had called back:

"Remember, mother's going to ask you to luncheon again."

Carmella had smiled and waved an idle hand.

In the machine Mr. Barrington began gruffly:

"Didn't you hear Dixon honk? What were you saying to that dago kid?"

"Nothing in particular," said John, adopting his lifelong defensive rôle.

"Well, you kept me waiting till I've probably missed a ten thousand dollar appointment. If you come with me again, you stick to me. See?"

"Yes, sir!" said John dutifully.

"Drive fast, Dixon," commanded Mr. Barrington.

They rode in silence, but two men were thinking. Mr. Barrington's thoughts were timid wishes.

"By God!" he thought. "She's a kid. If my kids could only have her gumption. If,"—he started in his seat at the abruptness of the thought—"if my boy John would—would—like her! My God!"

He rode on, dazed with the thought.

Meanwhile the chauffeur was thinking. And the

substance of his thought could be summed up in the one phrase:

"What the hell! She's only a kid."

John, in his corner, was practicing boredom by thinking his father rather a bore.

Chapter Sixteen

DISCIPLINE MODIFIED

CARMELLA'S one splendid day was not repeated.

No further call to arms thrilled her fighting instinct.

Occasionally, when she teased, Tommaso took her with him for the day. But Greendale seemed to need her no more.

Once or twice she walked up the road to Elm Heights, the rival development, and with sinking heart realized that progress was faster there. Both projects had been greatly expanded. Already houses were nearing completion, and more cellars were being begun daily. It was evident that Mr. Barrington was in a desperate race with his rivals.

One day Tommaso added another truck to his equipment. From Mr. Hastings, whom she overheard talking with a stranger on the plat, Carmella gleaned the news that there would be a show-down between the two in the early autumn, in the form of an auction on each plat. She noticed that her father was taking on a few more men. But still there were nearly twice as many at work at Elm Heights.

Still Tommaso said nothing, nor asked Carmella for help in any conference. Leaving the house before she was out of bed, he came back at night too tired to talk. Sometimes he merely grunted when she asked permission to go to the movies with Nicolo, and she promptly went.

Vacation came to an end, and Carmella regretfully returned to school, carrying her promotion card into Miss Silva's room—the last grammar grade. They began on Africa the first day, and Africa irked her. So did arithmetic, and so did the story of some early Indian war. All these were so infinitely less interesting than Greendale.

From Nicolo, whom she saw nearly every morning as she passed Mike Laudini's place, she learned that affairs at Greendale were moving badly. Elm Heights was apparently winning the race.

"Old Man Barrington is getting fidgety," said the boy. "I helped Mike deliver some stuff night before last. The old boy was half pickled and ugly. Must have paid graft somewhere and afraid he wasn't getting his money's worth. Your dad's got to go some, or there'll be trouble."

That morning Carmella deliberately disobeyed Miss Silva. It began while she was thinking over what Nicolo had told her. When Miss Silva, less poised than Miss Kelly, scolded her for inattention, Carmella flared up. She could not have told why. It merely relieved her feelings.

"I'll study when I like," she said, with smothered fury. "Already it is that I know more than you do about many things. I have things to think about besides the river Nile and the population of Liberia."

She spoke from the day's geography-science lesson. Miss Silva hesitated. She taught the difficult age, and was skilled in encounters between old world tradition blossoming into new freedom. But this was complete mutiny on the high seas of learning.

She turned to her desk and wrote rapidly for a moment, while the class looked on in dubious wonder. Carmella, almost the youngest, had long since led whenever she would lead. Mostly, she ignored her classmates. Naturally, therefore, if anything dire were to happen to Carmella, the class would be glad to see it happen. There was a wave of disappointment as Miss Silva said:

"Carmella, come here and take this note to Mr. Carroll."

Downstairs, in the principal's office, Carmella waited uneasily until he came from his private office.

"Hello, Kid Kate," he said. "What's up?"

She handed him the note, and grew slowly red of face as he apparently went through it several times. Finally he looked down at her.

"Why wouldn't you?" he asked.

"Why wouldn't I what?"

"You know."

"There's lots more exciting places than Africa," said

Carmella unexpectedly. Mr. Carroll was surprised, but a principal grows used to sudden turns.

"What place, for instance?" he asked, quietly.

"Why—why, here—Greendale."

"Oh, you're interested in Greendale, then?"

"My dad is," said Carmella, proudly. "He's a contractor out there. I was thinking about his job when Miss Silva jumped on me."

"Just what does he do?"

Carmella glanced quickly at the principal, and saw that he was really interested. Not simply make-believe. Words jumped to her lips. She poured out the story of her hopes and fears, of her power to help if Tommaso would only let her, of how much more exciting this was than red and brown spots on a map.

"And you were planning how to help dad, weren't you?" said Mr. Carroll soothingly. "I know you were. But now listen to this, Kid Kate! The way to help dad is to learn all you can in every way you can. School isn't the only way, but it's a very important way. Don't you know more about America and its language than your father and mother do?"

Carmella laughed.

"And how much did school help you this way, when they know so much more than you do about other things?"

Suddenly Carmella's eyes danced.

"Say, Mr. Carroll!" she exclaimed. "I wish you

talked dago and my dad had you for a foreman. He needs a good guy like you."

Never before had a pupil so talked to the principal. Never before had he felt so nearly beyond his depth in the presence of a fourteen-year-old. But he went on:

"Perhaps it's better for me to be helping you learn to help dad. You can't do that unless you learn all about ——"

"Africa?" Carmella grinned mischievously.

"You'll be glad some day to know about Africa, too. But in order to learn, you must let those who know more than you do guide you. Don't you let your father tell you about the contracting business?"

"All he will," admitted the girl.

"Then let Miss Silva help you all she will. That means obeying her. Now will you go back and tell her you're sorry you behaved badly, and then go on learning to help dad?"

"Are you sure it will help dad to have me lie to Miss Silva?"

"It won't be a lie, because you want to learn to help."

"Miss Silva is a nut," declared Carmella stoutly.

"She is a good teacher if you'll let her teach you."

Carmella gazed squarely into his eyes until he almost blinked. Suddenly she turned and left the office without a word.

Mr. Carroll sat down and wiped his forehead. The principal who had the hardest school in the city to

manage, had won what in later years he considered his greatest victory.

Upstairs, the door to Miss Silva's room opened swiftly and Carmella entered with firm feet. Walking straight to the desk she said:

"I'm sorry, Miss Silva. I oughtn't to have sassed you. The Nile overflows its banks to make money for those who plant early vegetables."

Miss Silva, wise with experience, had the grace not to laugh.

"That's good, Carmella!" she said heartily. "Now please take your seat."

The class was frankly disappointed that she gave no evidence of physical punishment, and wondered again how this daughter of Tommaso Coletta managed to come through so many encounters with the law so little scathed.

Carmella drifted through the rest of the day's lessons. In spite of her promise, her mind was still at work in the contracting business. Particularly had her talk with the principal focused her thoughts on a recent interview—the only one in which her father had asked her to interpret.

It was at the Florentine Trust Company, not far from Doty Street, where she had gone with Tommaso to help him establish credit in a bank where he could do business in his own tongue.

All she remembered was the picture of a heavily

mustached man who sat at a desk near the entrance and told her that her father's credit was not good.

"Not that he isn't reliable," the man hastened to add, "but he has not established a line of credit."

"And what does that mean?" she had asked.

"Well, of course, he must put his whole account with us, and buy securities here," said the mustache.

"Fine!" she answered. "Then Tommaso Coletta the contractor will keep right on banking with the Central Trust, where he has an account."

"Oh!" exclaimed the mustache. "Does he bank with the Central? Then of course we should be glad ——"

"Thanks! He'll be glad to keep on doing it," snapped Carmella.

She led her father out, telling him the bank was no good.

The memory of this interview blurred her attention to lessons. Twice Miss Silva asked questions, and twice forgave Carmella for not answering. Something that the teacher could not fathom was happening. Like a wise teacher, she yielded a few of the eternal verities to the vagaries of youth.

Carmella, in odd intervals of thought, wondered just how badly the building race in Greendale was going against her father, and why it was going that way. It kept her worried, in a way she did not know, that a person could be so plagued.

In reality it was a parental worry. In business mat-

ters, she felt, her father Tommaso was her child. Her child in language, at least.

The school day came to an end, and Carmella had a sudden inspiration. Instead of turning toward Doty Street, she started downtown. There was just a chance, she knew, that Dixon would be waiting near the Central Trust building for Mr. Barrington.

Dixon would know Greendale affairs as Nicolo could not. And she was sure he would tell her.

In this, as in so many of her plans, she met with good luck. Dixon was there, parked half a block away from the building, smoking a cigarette as he sat at the wheel. Carmella opened the door, and quietly stepped in beside him.

"Hello, Kid Kate!" he exclaimed. The throwing away of his cigarette was as involuntary as if she had been Mrs. Barrington. Carmella noted it without seeming to.

"Hello, Dixon!" she answered. "I hope you're well."

"I am, kid," said the chauffeur, wonderingly. "And you?"

"All right! But I wish you'd tell me just what's happening to dad's job out Greendale way. I want to know all about it."

"All what about what?"

"You know what. Why's your boss worried? Why isn't my dad beating the Cronin gang over at Elm Heights? What am I going to do about it?"

"I'm no contractor, kid," said Dixon, laughing. "If I was, I wouldn't be all dolled up in a uniform driving other folks's wagons. I'd be contracting."

"You mean you'd be expanding," said Carmella. And as she made the pun she was conscious of a new mastery of language.

"Well, you know what I—oh, I see! Joke by La Piccola Padrona. Good girl, kid! Well, you asked questions, and you've answered them."

Carmella's face registered bewilderment, and Dixon chuckled.

"Thought you were so bright you'd get that one. You said a contractor ought to expand, didn't you?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"Well, that's that! Your dad's on a big job. It's grown bigger since he took it. Is he expanding?"

"Isn't he? He's got more men, and one more truck."

"Not enough! Not enough! He hasn't kept up with the job. His excavation work has been holding up masons and carpenters for two weeks. He needs two more trucks and a lot more men, and he needs 'em toot sweet, meaning pronto, alias sudden."

"But that takes money," said Carmella earnestly.

"Like enough. Everything else does."

"And dad has blown most of his bank roll into it already. So what the hell?"

"Maybe it'll be more hell if he doesn't speed up," said Dixon.

Suddenly they were interrupted by the opening of

the rear door of the sedan, as Mr. Barrington appeared and stepped in.

"Dixon!" he shouted. "What does this mean?"

Carmella felt herself shriveling, trying to hide behind the seat.

Chapter Seventeen

DIPLOMATS CARRY THROUGH

IN HER shame and terror at being caught, Carmella awaited anything, her brain numb and her body suddenly cold. She expected Dixon to say that she was a harpy—she had read the word somewhere—and explain that he was only waiting to drive her to the police station and give her up.

Dixon turned casually to his employer's angry question.

"You know Carmella Coletta, Mr. Barrington. Her dad's your cellar man out at Greendale. Remember how she fought off the fake business agent one day?"

Mr. Barrington grunted. He had never quite forgiven himself for yielding to Carmella's hold-up on the price of her father's lots. But he had admired her beyond measure on the day of which Dixon spoke.

"Well," went on the chauffeur, "I saw her hurrying past here a few minutes ago and stopped her to find out if she couldn't hurry Tommaso and his gang. She didn't want to wait; said she was due home. I said I was sure you'd like to get her help and would let me drive her there."

Mr. Barrington was silent for a moment, as if digesting this novel idea of doing business through a schoolgirl who was younger than his own pampered and futile Margaret. Yet he remembered that this same child had beaten him in a real estate deal, and had saved the day when a grafter appeared.

Carmella needed the delay to adjust herself. She turned a glance of worshiping gratitude on Dixon. She had not known there were such men in the world—men who would brave their jobs to cover a foolish girl's folly. Never would she forget the way in which she had forced herself on him.

"What do you know about your father's business?" Mr. Barrington suddenly growled. In his moment of reflection he had decided to try her out. Either she could help, or she was a nuisance. He would find out which.

"He's got a job on his hands," said Carmella, finding her voice with difficulty.

"Then why's he falling down on it?"

"I know he's not speeding up to match the Cronin crowd," she answered. "He hasn't got the men, and he hasn't got the trucks."

"Then why doesn't he get 'em? I've told him to."

"Did you advance him the money to?" asked Carmella, with surprising calmness.

Mr. Barrington thereupon lost his temper.

"Did I what?" he roared, in tones that made the traffic officer turn.

"Did you advance the money?"

"What! Why should I? Why should I?"

The real estate promoter was growing incoherent, and Carmella thereupon grew calmer. She was used to anger and its weaknesses.

"Because," she said softly, "you're trying to speed him up beyond what you said when you hired him to break your strike out there. He broke it. Then you changed your plans. But you didn't help him to meet them. It takes money to expand a job."

"He's got credit, if he's a real contractor," sputtered the promoter.

"Sure he's got credit—up to the size job it was when he took it. But now his credit depends on yours, Mr. Barrington. If you're good for it, why don't you lend it to him?"

Carmella spoke firmly, almost as if rebuking a child. The silence that followed was broken only by the soft hum of the motor as Dixon, without orders, began slowly, very slowly, to drive toward Doty Street. His admiration for the girl was equal to her gratitude to him. Where in the world, he queried, did such a child pick up such knowledge of grown-up affairs. He wished he dared look around to see how his employer was taking it. Carmella herself broke the long silence.

"I gotta get home!" she exclaimed. "Dad'll be sore."

"Take her home, Dixon, as you promised," said Mr. Barrington.

"Yes, sir!" said Dixon, inwardly chuckling.

Presently Carmella turned with the instinct of sociability and said:

"How do you like the booze Mike sends you, Mr. Barrington?"

"Wh-what's that? Mike? What the —— Mike who?"

"Why, Mike Laudini, your bootlegger. Dad says he's the only honest one there is."

"For the love of ——" began Mr. Barrington. Then he whistled softly. Then:

"How'd you come to think he was my bootlegger?"

Carmella realized that she had committed a social error. It ran through her thoughts that possibly a bootlegger's customers did not like all the world to know.

"Why, Mr. Barrington," she lied blithely, "I've worked for Mike, vacations and Saturdays. I thought of course you knew I knew you bought from Mike."

So naturally did she lie that the perturbed patron of the contraband arts was satisfactorily deceived. Carmella caught Dixon's glance of reproof and turned again to the real estate man.

"But you wanted me to talk about dad and his gang, didn't you?"

"Yes, yes, yes! What I want to know is, would he put on more steam if he had the capital?"

"You bet he would," Carmella answered easily. "He's going to be a big man some day. But he won't jump farther than he can land on his feet, my dad won't. If he had the price, he'd be ahead of you instead of behind."

In the pause that followed Carmella asked Dixon to stop around the corner from her house. Just as she was getting out, Mr. Barrington asked:

"Will you be there, out in Greendale, tomorrow morning, young lady?"

"Why should I?" asked Carmella softly.

"Because I say so! Because I want to talk turkey with your dad!"

Mr. Barrington shouted his answer, while Dixon, grinning, said out of the side of his mouth:

"Try, kid!"

"Thanks for the ride, Mr. Dixon," said Carmella, ignoring his employer as she darted toward the corner.

"Funny kid!" said Mr. Barrington, perplexed.

Tommaso came into the house presently, tired and silent as usual. Carmella greeted him with extra solicitude, but did not try to make him talk. At supper, however, she saw that his wine glass was kept filled.

"You're tired, *padre*," she said once.

"Yes!" he answered, and drank the grape juice that had inadvertently fermented the winter before.

That evening Carmella washed the dishes almost faster than both brother and sister could dry them, and hurried into the living room. Tommaso was

sitting in his Morris chair, smoking. She went to the phonograph and selected as the record Verdi's "Home to Our Mountains."

It was perhaps her father's favorite of favorites. She noted his pleasure as the first notes sounded, and knew that he was in a mood for music. Then came "I Have Sighed to Rest Me"; and "Happy Bridal Day" from *Lucia.* These three, she knew, were the records that Tommaso played most often.

As he half dozed, basking in memories of Italy, she asked:

"How's the work going, *padre?*"

"We are working," he replied.

"Listen, *padre caro!* Let me go with you tomorrow. Please?"

"You have your school."

"Ah, but *padre carissimo*, only this very day Mr. Carroll, the principal, said I should learn to help my father. It is good to learn to do that, he said, and the school is only part of the learning. He said those very words to me, *padre.*"

"Well," answered Tommaso sleepily, "I shall see in the morning."

Carmella rushed to the kitchen, where her mother was preparing for the morrow's breakfast.

"Mother of mine," she cried, "you are to wake me when father wakes."

"But ——" began the tired and perplexed mother.

"He has need of me," said Carmella firmly.

Maria sighed, and as that evening she mended torn clothing the phrase ran through and through her mind. "He has need of me."

Ten years ago, back in Italy, the sighed-for land, Tommaso had had need of her. He had told her so, with awkward caresses. She wondered, like blind groping in the dark, if he had need of her now, or was conscious of it.

And her children! Did they have need of her? Carmella had not. And Giuseppe, the sunny-eyed, was already beginning to prefer those associates who spoke the language of this drear country. Only the youngest three . . .

And they—ah! Day by day they were growing older and less in need.

In the morning she woke Carmella with the usual difficulty. "Your father ——" she began, and Carmella bounded from the bed. As Tommaso rose from the breakfast table Carmella dashed in and seized a cup of coffee. He looked doubtfully at his daughter.

"How about school?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm ahead of my class. And I told you last night that Mr. Carroll said that school was only a part. Besides, you promised."

Tommaso reflected. He did not remember whether or not he had, for he had been half asleep at the time.

"*Va bene!*" he said. "Come quickly."

The girl jumped and ran with him, in spite of Maria's protests.

The truck which served both to carry workers to and from the city and to haul earth from the cellars was waiting at the corner, two of Tommaso's crew already in it. Three more were picked up at the next street, and others at scattering points along the way.

"Where's Salvatore?" demanded Tommaso, as he counted his men.

"Don't know," answered the driver. "He said last night maybe he had another job."

Carmella looked quickly at her father. Only two trucks and these few men. No wonder the masons and carpenters were being delayed.

At Greendale Carmella was surprised at the progress made. She turned to the truck driver.

"Is this as far along as Elm Heights?"

"No, no, no!" he said quickly. "They have four trucks and twenty men digging. They'll beat us with the first houses to sell."

"What does that amount to?"

"What does it amount to? It amounts to that they will have the first sales, and that means the quickest growth. It means that their land will rise in price quicker than ours. It means that—*Santo Dio!*—it means that we are slow. No Mussolini! No pep!"

He spat the last word out like an expletive.

Presently Dixon swung into the plat, and Mr. Barrington emerged from the sedan. Tommaso was busy and did not see him. And Mr. Barrington purposely did not see Tommaso. It was his invariable strategy

that any interview should be begun by the other side Carmella, instantly alert, walked toward the car.

"Hello, Kid Kate!" he exclaimed cordially.

"Good morning! Thank you for the ride home last night. I forgot."

"You thanked Dixon, all right."

"Yes, but it was your car. I should have said it to you. I'm sorry."

"By George, what a kid!" thought Mr. Barrington, thinking the while of his own polished daughter's carefully cultivated rudeness.

As they talked, Tommaso came slowly toward them. Slowly and doubtfully. He knew that all was not going well. For days he had been sick of the job, sick of the constant harassment from unknown sources—frequent inspections and criticism from town officials. He would like to quit.

But the Colettas did not quit. He had it on his father's word, backed by the word of his grandfather, years ago, back in Italy. He had fought the strike, but he hated to fight unseen opponents.

The trio stood silent for several moments. Mr. Barrington was determined that Tommaso should make the first move. Carmella, inwardly frightened but outwardly calm, did not know what to say. Tommaso rarely spoke first in any matter.

It was Dixon, seeing the impasse and sensing its cause, who stepped forward and broke the spell.

"Hello, Tommaso!" he exclaimed. "How does it go?"

Tommaso grinned, but shook his head dubiously.

"Here you, Kid Kate," said Mr. Barrington. "You interpret. Ask him if he could do faster work if he had more men and trucks."

"Of course he could," answered the girl. "I won't ask him any such silly question."

"Oh, you won't! Well, ask him if he will *get* more men and trucks if I advance the money. Will you ask him that, Miss Won't?"

"Sure I'll ask him that," said Carmella. She talked some minutes with her father in Italian, weighing his replies and then asking more questions, until Mr. Barrington fidgeted. Finally, turning to him, she said:

"My father says he can and will. What are you going to do about it?"

For the next half hour Carmella stood between the two men, translating their "ifs" and "ands" more or less to suit her own ideas. Keenly alert to the need of seeing that Tommaso made the right answers, she was still conscious of an underlying cause of worriment.

Nobody had mentioned the green and red dress she had donned for the occasion. She wondered if Dixon had not noticed it.

"Why on earth does everybody in the world have to be dumb?" she thought to herself. And then, turning to her father, she explained:

"He says he will finance you, week by week, for

two more trucks and up to twenty-five men. You could beat that union gang at Elm Heights with that, *padre*."

Tommaso thought a moment, and then said "Yes." Carmella could have wept for joy. Instead, she turned to Mr. Barrington:

"My father says he will get trucks and men if you will pay him by the week instead of by the job. And then your land will sell better. Shall I tell him you say you will?"

Mr. Barrington nodded.

"Say it!" commanded Carmella. "Say what you mean! We don't take nods in our business."

"All right! I say it. I will. Tell him that."

"Damn that kid!" said he to himself later, as he recalled the scene. And, although matters went well from that moment in Greendale, he repeated the invective at intervals for weeks. Yet each time he thought it he wished that his own daughter were more like Carmella.

Carmella followed him to his car.

"Are you going to take me home?" she asked. "Or I'll have to walk. Your busses aren't any good till they run."

"Take her home," said the promoter, settling into the entire rear seat. Carmella slipped happily in beside Dixon.

"All right, kid?" asked the latter, from the side of his mouth.

"Dandy!" she replied. "And—thank you—Mr. Dixon."

She glanced back and saw that the promoter was nodding, with closed eyes.

"Say, Mr. Dixon," she asked, "whose driver are you, his or hers?"

Dixon chuckled softly.

"The Missus'," he said. "There's a squabble about that every day or so. He gets me only when she hasn't any heavy society stuff on. When she has, he uses taxis, believe me. He ought to have two cars, but he can't learn to drive himself."

Carmella laughed quietly but fervently. Even the big men of the world were ruled by their wives, she discovered.

As the sedan stopped in front of the cottage, Carmella turned:

"Thank you for the ride in, Mr. Barrington," she called, loudly enough to rouse him.

"What's that? Oh, yes, all right!" exclaimed the realtor. "Glad to do it."

To Dixon, she merely winked.

"Gosh, what a kid!" exclaimed the chauffeur.

"What's that, Dixon?"

"I only asked where to now, sir."

"Bankers' Club, and speed it. I'm late."

Carmella ran into the house, loudly calling for dinner.

"No wonder," said her mother. "You ate no breakfast."

"I had better than that," said the girl.

Her mother eyed her doubtfully, and said:

"You must eat quickly, or you'll be late for afternoon school."

"I'm not going to school this afternoon. I'm going to celebrate."

"Have you finished your father's need of you?"

"For today, yes!"

"Then you shall go to school."

"I shall not!" declared Carmella in English.

Then for minutes it happened that mother and daughter scolded each other, each talking a different language. Carmella's advantage lay in the fact that she could understand her mother's Italian, whereas Maria understood only scattered words of Carmella's fast English.

But she understood the tone. It is a thing that happens every day in some home of foreign-born parents and native-bred children. It is a tragedy that the world has not yet listed as such. Yet it is more poignant than any other.

Carmella spent the afternoon in a picture house with Nicolo.

Chapter Eighteen

LANGUAGE MEANS SOMETHING

INTO Hope House, the community settlement, walked Maria Coletta. Into Miss Sargle's office, and there she said, slowly and with deference:

"*Non parlo Inglesi.* To know—I—here."

"Yes, indeed!" said Miss Sargle, with a settlement house smile. "We can put you in a class next autumn."

This was in English, for Miss Sargle prided herself on not having to know the language of the country in whose suburbs she dwelt and worked. Maria did not understand the words, but she understood the tone of postponement.

"That be damn!" she cried, and found herself using strange words. "I learn—now—now—now!"

Miss Sargle was annoyed. This was out of routine, and anything out of routine annoys a professional goodwill worker.

"You ——" she began.

"*Madre di Carmella,*" said Mrs. Coletta calmly.

Miss Sargle suddenly decided to play safe. In army language, she would seek safety by passing the buck.

"Perhaps you should see Mrs. Barrington. She's here now. Come this way, please."

Miss Sargle led the way to the office of Mrs. Barrington, now presiding over the welfare not only of the sewing class, but of the entire house.

"This is Mrs. Coletta, mother of Carmella Kid Kate," said the superintendent. "She wants to learn English."

Mrs. Barrington beamed.

"I know your daughter very well, Mrs. Coletta. A wonderful girl. And I want to know you."

She was gracious—gracious—gracious. Briefly through her mind ran the taunt that she was "high hat." She tried desperately to be otherwise. Almost too desperately. Carmella would have sensed it instantly, but her mother was more responsive to surface impressions.

"Yes-s-s!" Maria answered slowly, resolved now or never to make the most of her few English words.

"Carmella—*si*, *signora!*—nice! Me—*Inglesi*—no spika—you show."

"I'm sure we can find a class for you," said Mrs. Barrington, calmly oblivious of the fact that the waiting Italian woman had just said "no spika." "Of course, we must wait till we can organize a beginners' ——"

Carmella's mother broke in angrily. The words were nothing, but again that deadly, far-off tone which meant "wait." *Per Dio!* When Carmella wanted to

do a thing, she did it, or swore if she could not. If that was American, then—she summoned all the English she knew for the battle.

"Me to spik Eenglish!" she shouted. "Spik Eenglish! You learn! Damn' soon! You bet!"

Mrs. Barrington looked hurt. These foreigners. . . . Still, there was social prestige in being at the head of Hope House.

"Miss Sargle," she called to the fidgeting figure in the background. "Will you please form an English class for Mrs. Coletta, immediately?"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Barrington. I'll teach her myself."

Miss Sargle was rubbing her hands in the apologetic manner of a ladies' maid caught pilfering her mistress's cigarettes. But she beckoned to Mrs. Coletta, and the latter followed her into the superintendent's office.

Walking with a new sense of power. She, even she, the humble Maria, had conquered by adopting what she felt to be the spirit of America—the will to go-get. For the first time since, timid and afraid, she had landed at Ellis Island, bewildered beyond words, she felt the sense of triumph. So this was what America was—you got what you demanded, if you demanded *fortissimo*.

She sat down in Miss Sargle's office for her kindergarten lesson. And on the instant she resolved to tell Carmella no word of this adventure until—until she

could—well, until—until once more she, the mother, should be able to command.

Carmella, meanwhile, was busy. There were weeks when she attended school faithfully. There were weeks when she went as she chose. Usually she chose to be there in the morning. When she was absent in the afternoon it was usually because Nicolo was free to take her to the movies. Because much of his work was now after dark, he had much free time in the afternoon.

One day she got her father's laborious signature on an excuse for absence. This she copied and recopied until she could sign his name almost better than he could himself. Her problem was to avoid writing it too well.

This was useful, although Mr. Carroll, to whom all excuses were turned in by the teachers, noticed that excuses which formerly came scrawled by Carmella's mother now came convincingly signed by her father. He asked Miss Silva to inquire the reason.

"Well, you see, Miss Silva," said Carmella confidentially, "it used to be that I had to help mother mostly. Now I have to help both. And mother doesn't like to write, so I get dad to do it. My dad, you see, is growing up faster than mother is."

"Growing up?" queried Miss Silva.

"Isn't that what they do when they learn to be like us Americans?"

"Perhaps," agreed the teacher. But to herself she added:

"My soul and conscience! 'Us Americans'!"

Later she repeated the conversation to Mr. Carroll, adding:

"But she does keep ahead of her class, in spite of her absences."

"If she's doing that, all right," said the wise principal. "I hear the boys telling how her father is becoming a big man in Little Italy, and if she interprets for him, fine! Our job is to see that these kids learn American, before they learn arithmetic or anything else. It's funny how the parents won't learn the language they live in. Yet they get along all right. Rich in ten years, some of 'em."

"I hear her father has a fleet of trucks and hundreds of men working for him."

"And I've heard he drives his own Studebaker. It's a great world. All I can drive is a Chev."

Carmella heard the same exaggerations in the schoolyard, and was determined not to sail under false standards.

"My dad," she declared, "hires his trucks and has only twenty-five men."

"Ye-ah! But he works for the Barrington man, doesn't he?" demanded one shrewd boy of fifteen, who in class never could tell whether Argentina was a place in Africa or the man who discovered the Northwest passage, if any.

"Sure he does," said Carmella.

"Well, then!" said the boy, as if this were the last word.

Carmella answered nothing. It occurred to her that there were times when to tell the truth and let hearers disbelieve it was one of the higher forms of diplomacy.

The Contractor Coletta myth grew amazingly in the school, and Carmella discovered that she was being treated in accordance with it. More invitations from the boys, which she steadily declined; more furtive gifts of cake and candy from the girls.

It reached out into Little Italy, until it came to Doty Street and to Nicolo. At first he scoffed. But he invited Carmella to the movies with a new sense of importance, and was less offended when she declined.

Between films, when she had accepted, he told her queer tales of after-dark deliveries of bootleg liquor at the homes of the socially prominent, some of which were based on fact. Carmella found these highly diverting, but once was moved to ask if there was no danger in these transactions.

Nicolo sneered.

"Not a chance! No danger to Mike. Hasn't he got one captain and two inspectors on his pay roll? And don't he own the alderman from the ward?"

"But the government crowd?" persisted Carmella.

"Government hell! Ain't one of the raiders Mike's cousin? All Mike's afraid of is that there'll be a

shake-up that will make him whisper till he gets a new lay of land."

"But mightn't you get arrested, Nicolo?"

"Not a chance! Not a chance!" (Nicolo was learning to talk out of the side of his mouth.) "If they ever nick that wise guy for a booze-peddler they'll do it with a raid, not a pinch."

"Where'd they raid?" asked Carmella quite innocently.

Nicolo sat up straight and shot a quick glance of doubt at her.

"If I knew I wouldn't tell," he said. "And I don't know. Neither do you. Watch your step, kid!"

"Good Lord, I don't care. What's gnawing you, anyway?"

"In my business, kid, you gotta watch out. You don't know nothing if they ever ask you, see?"

"If they ever ask me things I'll decide what to know and what not to know," said Carmella hotly. "And no half-baked kid like you is going to tell me."

There was ugliness between them as they walked home from the theater that evening.

Chapter Nineteen

TWO USES FOR A TELEPHONE

CARMELLA had insisted that her father install a telephone in the house.

"Nobody ever got to be big business without a phone," she argued.

And then, as he hesitated:

"Suppose Mr. Barrington should want to call you."

Tommaso was surprised to discover how much the instrument eased his affairs, and he became proficient in its use when talking to his countrymen. When English was necessary, Carmella translated, putting in his calls for him.

She was the undisputed proprietor of the instrument. It was understood that, whenever the bell rang, she should answer. Maria, frankly afraid, never touched it.

The family was at dinner one noon when the telephone sounded. Carmella rushed to the instrument.

"Hello!" she said.

"O-oh!" and she caught her breath. "Listen, I'll call you about two o'clock."

Maria, understanding some of the words, kept silent.

She was not yet ready to reveal her knowledge of English.

Before school that afternoon, Carmella telephoned to the Barrington home. To reach Dixon was a matter of convincing the butler.

"Hello, Mr. Dixon!" she said. "I can talk now. I'm on a pay station phone. "What was that you were asking?"

Then ——

"Oh, Mr. Dixon, what a lark!"

Then a final direction:

"Not in sight of school. Mr. Carroll might see."

A quarter of an hour later she joined him, around the corner.

"Where'd you like to go?" asked Dixon, as she jumped into the car.

"Anywhere in the world but Doty Street and Greendale. Drive me through the swell parts of the city, will you? I never really did see it all."

For two hours Dixon drove her through the newer and finer residential streets, avoiding only the section near the Barrington house. He knew the names of the owners of most of the finer houses, and Carmella made him tell them all. Once she had him drive around the block and twice past a house that particularly took her fancy.

Carmella sat absorbed, and Dixon would have been surprised had he known what a remarkably good record she could have made in an examination on the

subject afterwards. She had a flair for learning what she wished to know.

Then into the suburbs. Here, with fewer houses, their talk became more general. The movies, for instance. Did Dixon like them? It seemed that he did, particularly feature films with a lot of fighting in them.

"Don't you adore love stories?" she asked.

"Not the silly ones," he said.

"There aren't any silly love stories—not if they're real ones."

Dixon laughed so brutally that she was offended.

"There's only one actress I can stand in the love stuff," he finally explained, "and that's because I get such a laugh out of it, because I used to know her."

"You know a movie actress?" Carmella was suddenly aquiver.

"Not now! But Peggy Dorr and I used to go to school together in Iowa."

"Peggy Dorr!"

Carmella's exclamation was ecstatic.

"Sure! She was a measly-faced kid in the fifth grade. She's changed some since her name was Stella Krumpenheimer. Or else she buys her face at a darned good drug store."

"Mr. Dixon, I don't think that's nice. Why, Peggy Dorr is my very most favorite actress. Doesn't she love just wonderful!"

"That's what gives me the big kick," said Dixon

placidly. "She used to be the tag end of nothing with the boys. We wouldn't look at her, she was so dumb."

Carmella was silent. Apparently she had lost interest, and made no answer when Dixon spoke. At last she said:

"Mr. Dixon, I know why Peggy Dorr loves so awfully swell."

"Shoot!" said he. "I'll keep the secret."

"It's because when you and the other boys knew her you didn't love her. And she kept thinking about it, and wondering why not, and how she could make you love her. And she thought it out. That's why she's such a wonderful actress now. She thought it out."

"Maybe that's an idea. Maybe I could collect royalties from her now, for helping to make her a big actress."

"Why?" asked Carmella, sceptically.

"For just what you said. For not loving her on sight, so she'd have to think it out."

"Mr. Dixon," said Carmella sternly, "I think you're simply horrid."

"Well, gosh, kid! How was I to know she was going to grow into one of the grandest little eye-artists in Hollywood? All she was then was a wobbly-kneed kid that always looked like she was going to be sick tomorrow."

"Would she know you now?" asked Carmella abruptly.

"Far be it from me to say. Probably not. They do say these film stars shake everybody that knew 'em when they was kids. Still, Stella—I mean Peggy—might remember the red-head who washed her face in snow so hard she told the teacher."

"Did you wash Peggy Dorr's face in snow?" There was awe in the question.

"I sure did, worse luck!"

"Why worse luck?"

"Because the teacher told the principal, and I got licked."

"Peggy Dorr got you licked?"

"I'll say she did."

"Weren't you proud?"

"Huh! Remember, kid, she was Stella Krumpenheimer then."

Carmella sighed.

"Say, kid," he went on, "how'd you like to see a Peggy picture some evening, when I'm off? I promise not to laugh."

"Oh, I'd love to," the girl answered eagerly.

As Dixon drove her toward Doty Street they were busy devising a code by which he could telephone her, and she could answer without revealing her message to her assembled family.

Carmella entered the house, hearing trouble inside as the door opened. Maria was scolding Giuseppe, while the boy sulked. Carmella tiptoed to where she

could overhear. To a threat of physical punishment, she heard him exclaim, in English:

"Aw, dad's too tired to do any licking when he gets home now."

For answer Maria seized him by the shoulder and marched him, slightly struggling, into the bedroom which, since Carmella could remember, had been the place of family discipline.

Listening intently, Carmella wondered. For years her mother had taken no part in such scenes, leaving the whippings to Tommaso. This was a new development, together with her apparent understanding of some of Giuseppe's English. Was it possible that there was some connection between the two phenomena?

Soon she heard her brother frantically promising to be good, and presently he emerged, sniffling, followed by his mother.

Twice that evening, after the younger children had gone to bed, Carmella spoke to her mother in English. But each time Maria told her to repeat in "the" language. She was not yet ready for the real test of her new and growing knowledge.

Carmella was mystified. Nor was this feeling lessened as she noted that her mother was developing a new poise. It seemed that her family might be worth new study; it was becoming something more than a background for her other interests.

Twice her father and mother, evidently by agree-

ment, refused to allow her to go to the movies with Nicolo. She met the latter one morning, as she was on her way to school.

"Say," he began, "what's the works?"

"It's past me, Nick," said Carmella, flushing. "Dad's got a grouch, I reckon. But believe me, when he says anything, it's SO."

"Aw, gosh! Listen, I can get away tonight. Are you with me? You can pretend to study with Amelia. See?"

For the sake of her self-respect Carmella consented. Prejudice among today's youth against parental control is especially strong among the foreign-born. Descendants of the *Mayflower* group, who think they have trouble with their sons and daughters, know nothing whatever about it.

As they rose from table that evening, Carmella said to her mother:

"Can Giuseppe wash the dishes? Miss Silva says we've got to learn more history. I told Amelia I'd study it with her. She's just plain dumb."

And before her mother could answer, she had gone. Down the street she met the waiting Nicolo.

"So you made it this time," said he, more sneeringly than she liked.

It started the evening wrong. Through the two-hour show Carmella found the hand-holding and the conversation slightly forced. She was disgusted by the "Western" that Nicolo applauded so heartily. The

society drama introduced only one setting and a frock or two that she felt added to her social knowledge. And the "love stuff," as Dixon had called it, was undeniably flat.

Carmella suddenly realized that she was criticizing in terms of Dixon's point of view. These love scenes, she was sure, would disgust him. But Dixon's disgust would be more refined than Nicolo's. His would have at least a share of humor. Nicolo's was merely the intolerance of ignorance.

Her silence, as they walked home, led Nicolo to ask:

"Getting high hat since your dad made his ten strike in the digging department?"

"You," said Carmella quietly, "can go to hell."

Instantly the boy was contrite.

"You don't mean you don't like me any more?" he pleaded.

"Sure I like you. But I'd like you a darn sight better if you'd stop thinking it was smart not to try to grow up."

"For the love of Pete, kid, say it again. I don't get you."

"You've got all kinds of chances, Nick, and you don't improve," explained Carmella patiently. "You don't try to. I bet I couldn't carry hooch into all the best houses and not learn a darn thing, like you don't.

"You think it's smart to be rough and tough, Nick,"

she went on. "Well, maybe it is. But I'm on the other track. I think it's smart to learn something."

"Mike don't have to learn nothing," said Nicolo gruffly. "Yet lots of the damn high hatters are mighty glad to know Mike—after dark."

"My friends ain't going to be after-dark friends," said Carmella crisply.

Chapter Twenty

WICKEDNESS REVEALED

CARMELLA was pretending to study her lessons on the kitchen table when the telephone rang. For a week she had been waiting for it. A Peggy Dorr picture was at the Gaiety, and Dixon had promised. But so far he had sent no word.

She started for the instrument. But so, also, did Giuseppe, for the first time challenging her right to answer.

"It's for me, I bet," he cried.

"Joe! I'll answer it," screamed his sister.

There was a scuffle as he reached the instrument a second ahead, but he held his ground. Still confident that the call must be for her, Carmella waited, until she heard:

"Hello, Pete! Oh, that's all right. Huh? Naw, nobody killed. Just my kid sister throwing a fit. Oh, she don't count."

He turned and grinned wickedly at his sister, and Carmella would gladly have killed him. Here, for the first time, she recognized him as a rival worth reck-

oning. Slowly she walked back to the kitchen, where the family was sitting.

Presently she heard Giuseppe, in the hall, chatting in a slang which she herself hardly followed. She heard him exclaim:

"Zat so!—Gee whiz!—Sure I do!—What for? Bootleggin' for Mike, I bet.—Bailed yet?—Zat so?—Too cocky anyways!—Darn glad of it!—Sure he was! —Been helping Mike since before last Christmas.—Zat so!—Uh-huh!—Well, s'long, Pete! Serves him right.—See y'at school tomorrow."

The boy swaggered back into the kitchen, grinning.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he asked.

"What about what?" demanded Carmella. "What about Nicolo?"

"Pinched!" said her brother impressively.

"Yes-yes! I heard that. But when? What for? What for?"

Joe would have delayed answering, if he dared, to tantalize his sister. But his parents were listening too. So he swung his speech to Italian and went on:

"Pete didn't know what for. Nicolo's arrested. You ought to know what for; you know him best. They prob'ly caught him with a case of hooch or something. Do him good!"

Carmella walked quickly toward her brother and slapped his face with all the violence of recent emotions.

"Carmella Coletta!" cried her mother.

But Tommaso suddenly laughed, long and loud, like a boy whose voice is changing.

Both children, dismayed, turned toward him. Whatever battle they might have staged turned to bewildered truce at their father's mirth. Maria gazed, uncomprehending. But not for years had she questioned anything that her lord and master did.

Tommaso was still chuckling heavily when the sound of the front-door bell saved them from any further comment. Giuseppe, being nearest, darted for the door, whereupon Carmella sat down in a premium chair, as prim and disinterested as a defeated candidate for office.

From the door she heard a deep voice using her name, and Giuseppe, his voice queer and uncertain, saying:

"Y-y-yes, s-sir, sh-she's here all r-right. I'll c-c-call her."

"I'll just come in," said the heavy voice, followed by heavy footsteps.

And there, framed in the doorway, stood the perfect policeman in full uniform.

Six feet and over; a hundred and ninety pounds; wide, square shoulders; face heavily lined, but with a smile in every twitch of it; agile and happy; pleasant but firm. For months thereafter Policeman 437 was the image that Carmella pictured to herself playing opposite, in her daydreams of Hollywood.

"Par-r-don, folks!" he said. "But I'm after want-

ing to discourse with a girl named Kid Kate, or some such, and she's a friend of Nicky Pieri, I have been told."

"*Cola!*" said Tommaso, pointing to Carmella.

"I'm Kid Kate, if that's what you want to know," said Carmella.

She walked firmly toward the officer, though her heart was beating high. Lately she had learned that pugilists were taught to look each other squarely in the eye, and even the policeman's practiced gaze almost fell before the intensity of her stare.

"Well, now, Kid Kate, y're a friend of this Nicky boy, I do be hearing. Ain't you now?"

"Tell the truth, Carmella!" screamed Maria, in Italian, and fell to weeping.

In that instant Carmella felt family mastery again. Her mother was frightened. Her new trick of understanding English, and of punishing Giuseppe, and of poise, was a bluff. She was scared by a uniform. Uniforms—hell! She had sassed them many a time. Even old Pat Cunningham's.

"You bet your pet life I'm a friend of Nicolo, Mr. Cop," she declared. "Now what have you got to say?"

Officer Dineen caught his breath. He had not expected to meet one so fully in command of herself.

"Tell him to sit down," said Tommaso.

"Gee whiz, Mr. Cop! I forgot my manners," said

Carmella. "Come in and sit down. Now what's it all about?"

Officer Dineen spread his ample self in the premium chair, thereby causing Mrs. Coletta an instant's worry. There was so much policeman and so little chair.

"Shoot, Mr. Cop!" said Carmella.

"Well, now, I'll tell you," began Mr. Dineen sociably. "It seems we have down at Central station a young lad named Nicolo, who lives opposite you here, and it seems it's up to him to prove his char-ac-ter, for good or bad. And he's given the names of Kid Kate Coletta and Mike Laudini. Now we know Mike, but he wasn't home when I called. So I've come here. The Chief sent me up to see what you'd testify to in court, in case you get called."

He grinned, and his grin was more effective than a lifelong friendship. It was this easy friendliness, and his skill in extracting facts from the reluctant, that had won him promotion to the detective staff.

"You mean you want me to tell you about Nicolo?" asked Carmella.

"Sure! Just that, if you want to. You ain't on the witness stand now, you know. But if you want to tell me, it'll maybe help Nicky about his bail and such-all."

"Well, believe me, Mr. Officer," began Carmella, "whatever you got him pinched for, he ain't guilty. All he ever did was just work for another man. He's the squarest, honestest, reliable-est kid there is south

of City Hall. Whatever he says he didn't do, he didn't do it. Get me?"

"I get you, kid, and that's good," said Officer Dineen, nodding to reassure her. "And you'll likely go on the witness stand and swear the same?"

"You bet I will. Why shouldn't I? It's God's own truth."

"No reason why not. But if they say he was helping Mike make hooch—what'd you say then?"

"What do you mean, helped make hooch? He never! All he did was help Mike ——"

She saw the policeman's eyes twinkle, and realized that she had been tricked into saying too much.

"That's all right," said Officer Dineen soothingly. "I ain't looking up the hooch business. Just thought I'd ——"

"Say!" interrupted Carmella. "What was Nick pinched for, anyway?"

"Robbing his employer," said the officer. "Down to the Eclipse store. He's been working in the delivery room Saturday afternoons. Made collections and kept 'em. Just plain stealing."

Carmella stood, feet apart, like a boxer.

"What's that, Mr. Cop? What's that you say Nicolo did?"

"Stole money."

"You lie!" she cried. "All cops are liars. You're one."

Mr. Dineen smiled tolerantly. He was used to outbreaks.

"He's confessed," was his answer.

"Confessed! Nick says he stole! He never did! He couldn't! He wouldn't."

"All he did was to do it. He's signed a confession."

"No, no! He couldn't! My God, Mr. Cop, he's a bootlegger, yes! Sure he is. But stealing! No-no-no! Not Nicolo!"

"He gave you as a character witness. Want to help him? Like enough a girl like you with plenty of sob stuff could get him probation."

Carmella was silent a moment. Then slowly she asked:

"He—Nicolo—stole—money?"

"Did, and admits it."

"Sob for that guy?" the girl suddenly cried. "Sob for a thief? A cheap thief? All I said was about bootlegging. I thought that was all he did. I thought he was straight. But, God! If he stole, I'm off him. Off him! Off him! The little rat! The damned little rat!"

Officer Dineen rose and pretended to be ready to go.

"Then you're off him?" he asked.

"Off him? Of course I'm off him. The rat! I thought he'd grow up to be an honest bootlegger. If he's a crook, I'm off him. Tell him that from me."

Officer Dineen, slightly dazed but with new wisdom, which would help him in some future case, left the

house. Carmella showed him to the door, and returned to the living room, where Tommaso and Maria were eagerly waiting to be told the story.

Briefly, in Italian, Carmella outlined the case. Maria wrung her hands, but Tommaso merely smoked more heavily than usual, and watched his daughter.

Carmella started to turn to her schoolbooks, but suddenly jumped to her feet and ran for her hat.

"I'm going over to sleep with Mrs. Pieri," she said. "She won't miss Nicolo till late, but she'll be awful then. I've gotta break the news to her. And I'll stay all night. She'll need me."

Tommaso looked doubtful, but Maria smiled and nodded.

Chapter Twenty-one

GUILTY, WITH REASONS

CARMELLA broke the news as gently as she was able, but Nicolo's mother spent the evening, till well toward midnight, rocking in her chair and moaning.

Like most of her friends in Little Italy, she spoke little or no English, and America was a land of bewilderment. With her only son in the hands of the dreaded police, she was desolate indeed.

"You are a dear girl to be with me this night," she said to Carmella.

"Let's go to bed. We must rest," suggested the latter.

They slept together, fitfully and unrelaxed, as womenfolk have forever slept when their menfolk have brought disgrace upon them. Nicolo, in his cell, slept more soundly than they.

In the morning Mrs. Pieri rose early, declaring that she must visit Nicolo at once.

"We'll go over and see Mike Laudini," said Carmella. "He'll help, because Nick was working for him."

After a hasty breakfast they stopped at Mike's, but

found that he was gone. "For two days," said his wife. He had left hurriedly the night before. Yes, in answer to Carmella's question, he had heard that Nicolo was pinched.

Carmella wondered. Never before had she heard of Mike's leaving the city for so long. He was a retailer, not a "runner." Business rarely called him far. It looked, Carmella feared, like desertion, and her anger rose.

They were at the police station long before court time. Little Italy's hours were early. Carmella walked to the desk and roused the dozing sergeant.

"We'll talk with Nicolo Pieri," she said firmly.

"Huh!" said the sergeant, waking heavily.

"Nicolo Pieri. Quick! Here's his mother to talk to him."

"Say, kid," said the sergeant, bending over the desk, "what alderman's little girl are you? If you own this place, say so. If you don't, cut out that 'quick' stuff. See?"

Carmela threw high voltage into her direct gaze and into her voice.

"Listen, cop," she said. "I don't know your name, but I can find it out easy enough. The only man around here I know is Captain Conners. But over at headquarters I know half of 'em. I'm a friend of Mike Laudini's, if that means anything in your baby life. I'm a friend of Tom Barrington, the big real estate man. And my dad is Tom Coletta, and if that

don't mean anything to you, you better wise up on your job.

"Now do we see Nicolo quick, or do we not-quick? I want to know quick, because there's a pay station phone across the street, and if I gotta use it I want to use it quick. Get me? Quick!"

The dazed sergeant lurched to his feet.

"F'r the love of Pete, kid, where'd you get your line of politics?" he asked. "Sure you can see the boy. I think you're lying, but you're doing it damn' well."

He escorted the two to the detention room, and brought in Nicolo. The boy came gruffly and sullenly, looking down. His mother tried to embrace him, but he shook her off, and took refuge behind the sergeant.

"Oh, my Nicolo!" his mother cried.

"Lay off that stuff, for God's sake," growled the boy.

"Better watch your step, Nicky," said Carmella. "You may need your mother yet, you know, you rat! Mike's out of town for the week."

Nicolo almost leaped toward her.

"The hell he is! The hell you say!"

All through the hours he had been planning that Mike should "fix things" for him. He winced, and Carmella saw her advantage.

"Mike's skipped. You ain't pinched for his job. He knows what you're pinched for. That's why he skipped. He didn't want to be mixed up with a yel-

THE BOY CAME GRUFFLY AND SULLENLY, LOOKING DOWN

low pup like you. So I reckon you'd better make love to your mother, for a change, you rat!"

"Aw, you go to hell," he snarled.

"That's fine! You're a yellow pup, I said, and that goes. But your mother's the only one that can bail you. You better open up and spill the works, or you'll land for as long as I can land you. Remember, you're just over age for reform school. You'll get everything that's coming to you. And if it wasn't for your mother, I'd try to have 'em double it."

His mother, knowing nothing of what Carmella had said to him, but seeing his distress, put her arm about him. This time he did not draw away.

"Why did you do it, Nicolo, my Nicolo?" she asked, sobbing.

"Aw—because."

"Why? I said."

"Well, folks thought I was a bootlegger. Kid Kate herself thought so."

"Why did you steal?" repeated his mother, in the strained voice of anguish.

"I've told you!" shouted Nicolo. "I've told you. They thought I was a bootlegger. They thought that working for Mike I got a lot of money. Kid Kate thought so. They all thought so. Mike paid me ten dollars a week—ten dollars a week.

"And they all thought I was getting rich because I worked for Mike. That's the hell of this bootleg busi-

ness. They all think it's a million a minute—and never think of the graft you have to pay."

Mrs. Pieri sat, stunned. Her boy admitted stealing. She did not understand the reason. But he had stolen. She bowed her head and wept.

"Boy, you've got a bum alibi," said Carmella. "So you stole cheap money to keep up a bootleg front, did you? My God, what a nut!"

Sergeant Donovan, standing near, understood most of the Italian talk.

"Well," he said to himself, "I will be everlastingly damned! Ain't they the hellions, these wops!"

A clerk entered and touched his arm.

"Sorry folks," said the sergeant, "but this here young guy is due in court. Me and him better beat it."

Sullenly the boy pleaded not guilty. But he had no lawyer, so the case was set for trial a week later.

Because the sum involved was small, the judge placed bail at what he considered a nominal figure. But to Nicolo, unaided, two hundred dollars was as impossible as twenty thousand.

"Oh, my poor boy!" moaned Mrs. Pieri, knowing nothing of what was happening, except that a big policeman stood beside Nicolo. Carmella tried to explain the situation to her.

"Somebody must pledge two hundred dollars, or Nicolo must stay in the *prigione*."

"He didn't do it," moaned the mother, forgetting his own admissions.

"They haven't proved he did. He pleaded not guilty."

"Of course he did. My brave boy!"

"But," said Carmella, "they're going to keep him for trial, and they'll lock him up unless somebody offers two hundred dollars to prove he won't run away."

"My boy run away! Never!"

"Maybe he won't, Mrs. Pieri. But that's the law. Now do you want to keep him out of jail for the next week, by putting up two hundred?"

"Yes, yes! But what do I do? Tell me, Carmella."

Two policemen darted forward and the judge rapped for order as Carmella jumped to her feet and shouted:

"Say, Mr. Judge, can we bail him now?"

"Sit down!" commanded Judge Lawrence. "You are not a party to the case."

"But Judge, I mean your Honor, I mean—gosh-all-jiminy, Judge! I'm the one that talks English for that guy's mother. She wants to give bail. How do we do it? I mean—well, your Honor, this is the first time I was ever arrested—I mean was in court."

Old-timers in the courtroom looked to see the Judge hold the girl for contempt of court. He was a stickler for judicial dignity. But instead they heard him say:

"Come here to the desk, young lady."

"Who are you?" he asked, when the dazed Car-

mella reached the platform. "Any relation to this boy?"

"For heaven's sake, no, Judge! A relation to that yellow pup! But I'm a friend of his mother. My father is Tommaso Coletta, the big contractor."

This last sentence she proclaimed loudly and proudly, that all the court might hear. Whereupon the policemen present scratched their heads as they tried to place the name. They must look up Contractor Coletta. Evidently a new figure in the Italian colony, and as such to be reckoned with.

Calling the bail officer to his side, Judge Lawrence arranged to have Mrs. Pieri give a bond based on her sworn equity in the house she owned.

"You may do the interpreting," he said to Carmella, and added: "What's your name, young lady?"

"Carmella, in Italian. Kid Kate, in English."

"Are you a friend of Mrs. Barrington?" he asked.

"Not exactly," said Carmella firmly. "But I've been to her house."

The judge smiled. Not in months had he enjoyed so enlivening an incident in court. Nor so engaging an interpreter. He had heard of a girl called Carmella-Kid Kate from Mrs. Barrington, at whose home he played auction bridge once a week. Carmella did not know it, but this was to help make the path of Nicolo easier when he came to trial. Judge Lawrence had small patience with foreign-speaking offenders who were brought into his court—but a defendant who

had for a friend a friend of Mrs. Barrington's. . . . That was slightly different.

After the bail had been arranged, Carmella went to Nicolo and vented her wrath:

"Now, you dirty rat, take your mother home and take care of her. If you don't behave decent for the next week, I'll send you to jail. I'll come down and be a witness against you. And I happen to know the Judge. You rotten little yellow thief!"

Nicolo, perhaps for the first time in his life, was frightened.

"Come on, *madre*, let's go home," he said. "Thanks for bailing me."

With a smile of utter happiness and faith and love —a smile that made Carmella want to cry for the pathos of it—Mrs. Pieri took her son's arm and walked proudly out of the courtroom. He had been let off. That was all she understood of the proceedings.

Carmella reached her home a little before she would have had she gone to school.

"Where have you been?" asked Maria.

"Helping Mrs. Pieri help Nicolo out of trouble."

"And you have not been to school? And you did not come home to ask? I shall tell your father."

A dozen flaming answers flashed to Carmella's tongue. She was moved to defy Maria, but suddenly the picture of the courtroom and of Mrs. Pieri's anguish the night before blurred through her anger. No! Not for her was it to break a mother's heart.

"Padre Carbone at the church tells us to help those in trouble, mother," she said calmly. "I was trying to do that. Please do tell father, and I will explain it. He will understand."

Maria looked at her daughter, wondering.

"What happened to Nicolo?" she asked finally.

As Carmella finished the account of the morning's events, the telephone rang. The girl answered, and appeared to hesitate.

"I'll ask mother," Maria heard her say, and shortly she came racing back to the kitchen.

"*Madre!* Mrs. Barrington wants me to come to lunch tomorrow. It's Saturday. May I go? May I? I wish to very much."

Maria thought slowly.

"Hurry, mother. She is waiting at the telephone for me to tell her."

Maria's slow thoughts ran in this wise: lunch with Mrs. Barrington meant talk of Hope House. It would mean—it might mean—that Mrs. Barrington would slip—would tell of her own lessons in English. She had promised faithfully not to—but sometimes tongues slipped.

"Perhaps," Maria answered, after what to Carmella seemed an eternity of waiting. "Perhaps not. I will decide this afternoon. Tell her you will give your answer after school this afternoon."

"But, mother! What is the ——"

"Go!" said Maria, pointing toward the telephone.

Carmella did as she was told. Her mother's poise and tone were exactly as when she had punished Giuseppi. Carmella was puzzled. This world of hers, which once she had thought simple, was growing complex.

Hardly had she left the house for school that afternoon when Maria, nerving herself to the ordeal, went to the telephone. Laboriously she found the name and number in the directory, and for some minutes she practiced the sounds—Beacon four-four-six-eight. She had sent the younger children out to play. For this adventure she wished the house to herself.

Her heart almost failed her after she had lifted the receiver from the hook, but the operator's voice was unexpectedly friendly.

"Bea—con—four—four—six—eight," Maria said slowly and painfully.

"Beg pardon. Number, please!" said the pleasant voice.

Maria groaned, for she did not understand the formula. But before she could try again, the voice said, this time in her own language:

"Don't you wish to give it in Italian?"

Maria sighed with relief. The voice was that of an Italian girl, chosen for the place because she could speak both languages. And through that exchange went many conversations, wholly in the tongue of Italy.

Presently a man's voice answered the call.

"Yes! Mrs. Barrington's residence."

"Hel-lo!" panted Maria.

"Whom do you wish, madame?" asked the voice.

"I veesh spik Mees Barringtone—talk with she."

"Who is it speaking, please, madame?"

Maria's English lessons had progressed to a point where she understood much more than she dared try to speak. She gave her name.

"Pardon, madame," came the voice. "I do not quite understand. Would you please be so good as to repeat the name?"

"Mees Coletta. Col-et-ta! Less'n! You tell Mees Bar-ring-tone it ees mother of Carmella. She know."

"Please hold the wire," said the voice. Maria panted with fatigue as she waited. Then came Mrs. Barrington's voice:

"Yes, Mrs. Coletta. This is Mrs. Barrington."

Maria took a long breath and began:

"Mees Bar-ring-tone. You ask Carmella to you to-mor-row. Ees it not?"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Coletta, and I hope you'll let her come."

"Mees Bar-ring-tone, if she come you not say I spika Een-glish? You not say I taka de les-sone? You not say eet? No?"

There was an instant's hesitation as Mrs. Barrington deciphered the language and accent. Then:

"Of course not, Mrs. Coletta. I will not say one

word about it. Now, may she come? I want to talk with her about Hope House."

"You spika Hope House—no spika me spika Eenglish."

"No, Mrs. Coletta. And please let her come."

"*Si!*" exclaimed Maria, and hung up the receiver with no further word of closing.

Sinking exhausted into the Morris chair, she fanned her face with her apron. She was worn out nervously, but happy. Her first adventure in American had apparently been a success.

Carmella, after school, telephoned to Mrs. Barrington that she would come, and rejoiced that she would have a chance to learn why Dixon had not taken her to the Peggy Dorr film at the Gaiety the week before.

Chapter Twenty-two

LESSONS FOR A LADY

CARMELLA, watching from the window, saw the Barrington sedan arrive, and saw also that Dixon was not driving. Instead was a tall, angular individual whose manner and words, when he spoke, revealed him as recently from England. He had, indeed, so lately learned to turn right instead of left, as in England, that he was still easily confused.

"Where's Dixon?" asked Carmella.

"I don't know, ma'am," he replied, narrowly avoiding a turn to the left in meeting another machine. If only these Americans would stop chattering to the driver! "I think he was allowed to go, ma'am," he added, after regaining control of his wheel.

Mrs. Barrington greeted Carmella warmly. Luncheon was announced immediately. Neither Margaret nor John was present. The hostess explained that both were lunching with school friends.

"I see so little of them now!" she mourned. "So many engagements! It's so very different from when I was a girl."

Carmella reflected that Margaret was only a year

older than she, and made a mental note. Mrs. Barrington went on:

"But I'm really glad we're alone, because I want to have you to talk with about our new Girl Scout troop at Hope House."

"I'm not a Girl Scout."

"No? But you could be. And before long I'm sure you could be a lieutenant, and then maybe a captain. It's a wonderful opportunity."

"Maybe it would be, if I liked it," said Carmella.

"Oh, but I'm sure you would. We have new equipment for athletics this year. I'm sure you'd enjoy Hope House, if you came."

"I don't like folks that try to do you good," said Carmella abruptly.

"But—but ——"

"I want folks to look straight at me instead of down at me. I shall not go to Hope House again."

"But," said the bewildered social personage, "the Girl Scout troop needs you. It is for girls of your own people. Several girls have said they would join if you did."

"Does your girl Margaret belong to the Girl Scouts?" asked Carmella, gazing steadily into Mrs. Barrington's eyes.

"Well, not yet, exactly. I've urged her, and she's thinking of it, with the St. Andrew's church troop. I hope she will soon, but—you see—she has—well, so many other interests."

Mrs. Barrington was actually floundering.

"So have I other interests," said the girl. "I shall not join."

"But—but—that's what I asked you here for."

An instant afterwards, and thenceforth for many years, Mrs. Barrington grew crimson every time she recalled that remark. Never even did she find an excuse for it that saved her self-respect.

Carmella laid down her fork—she was eating salad at the moment.

"Then I shall eat no more of your food, Mrs. Barrington. I'm sorry for what I've eaten. You asked me here to join. I will not join. I will not eat under false pretenses."

A blow in the face would have been a kindness to Mrs. Barrington at that instant. Again she had underestimated this strange child. And this time her own social genius had deserted her, while the Italian child sat calmly victorious. Her conversational recovery, however, did credit to her skill.

"But, Kid Kate dear, I asked you here to talk about several things."

"Then let's talk about Dixon," said Carmella suddenly, scoring a follow-up blow that again almost unnerved her hostess. This was a subject on which Mr. Barrington had raged far beyond his wont, and she had grown to hate the name.

"But, my dear," she said, "Dixon doesn't work for us any more."

"So I hear. Why not?"

"Because, you see, he was taken sick. He's in the hospital."

"You mean you fired him?"

"Of course not. But you know one can't wait weeks and weeks for one's chauffeur to be ill. Mr. Barrington was very liberal with him, and he'll have no difficulty in getting another place. I shall give him a recommendation."

"But couldn't you have hired a man just while Dixon was in the hospital?"

"I don't know. Good chauffeurs are hard to find. Barclay is a treasure, and he insisted on a permanent place."

"He's English, all right. He'll ditch you some day. If you'll excuse me, I'll be going. What hospital is Mr. Dixon in?"

"But, Kid Kate, we haven't finished luncheon, and ——"

"Excuse me! What hospital is Dixon in?"

"In the Memorial, but ——"

"I'm going to call on Mr. Dixon, and I think you're a damned heathen, Mrs. Barrington, to fire a man for being sick. I'll bet he caught cold driving for you."

She left the dining table abruptly, and ran from the house. Mrs. Barrington, thus dramatically deserted, had no heart to finish her luncheon.

At home that evening Carmella curled herself on the arm of her father's favorite chair for a talk in Italian.

"Mrs. Barrington has discharged Dixon, *padre*."

"What for?"

"For getting sick. Just a few weeks, the doctor said, but she fired him for it."

"This is America," said Tommaso, puffing his pipe.

"He'll be out of the hospital before long, and out of a job. *Padre mio*, may I ask a question?"

"What is it?"

"Why don't you get Mr. Dixon for a partner?"

Tommaso smoked heavily, without answering.

"Why don't you get him for a partner? He's American, and he knows about real estate. He can drive a car or a truck. He knows a lot of men.

"You know what he does not, *padre*, and he knows what you do not. You're going to be a big contractor some day. Dixon could help it happen."

Tommaso puffed long and earnestly. Once he emptied his pipe and refilled it without speaking. At last he spoke:

"You think it good, Carmella?"

"You bet!" she cried in English. But he understood.

"We will see," he finally said. "Time for bed now, *piccola ragazza*."

Early the next morning Carmella presented herself at the hospital, only to be told that visiting hours were in the afternoon.

"But," she exclaimed, "I've got to see him. It's business."

CARMELLA WATCHED HIS FACE INTENTLY

"Business!" the office clerk exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes, business. My father is Tommaso Coletta, the big contractor. Mr. Dixon is going to be his American partner."

"Then why doesn't your father come?"

"Because he can't talk English and Mr. Dixon can't talk wop. I'm their official interpreter. And it's very important."

Her insistence led the office clerk to telephone the ward nurse, and then to the assistant superintendent. He turned back to Carmella:

"You may see him, in the corridor, for ten minutes. You can't go into the ward at this time of day."

The nurse met her as she emerged from the elevator, and directed her to the far end of the corridor, along which a bathrobed figure was slowly walking.

"Well, hello, kid!" Dixon exclaimed, as she caught up with him. "I wondered who was coming, and sort of hoped it was you."

"How do you do?" asked Carmella, suddenly diffident. "I mean, are you getting well? I mean I'm glad to see you."

"Feeling finer every day," said Dixon, chuckling at the jumble of Carmella's greeting. "Just a case of neuritis, the doc said, from driving all day and not getting enough husky exercise. Be all right soon."

"Then are you going back to the Barringtons?"

Carmella watched his face intently, and saw it harden.

"No, I think not," was all he said.

"I had lunch—I mean part of a lunch—with Mrs. Barrington yesterday," said Carmella. "She said you were here. She'd fired you."

"That's right, kid! What did she say she fired me for?"

"For being sick."

"Well, that's right, I reckon. A servant isn't allowed to be sick, you know. Not in some families, anyway."

"Want to know what I told her?"

"Sure!"

"I told her she was a damned heathen, and ran away from lunch in the middle."

Dixon laughed like a joyous boy.

"Oh, you told her that, did you? What did she say?"

"I think she was mad. She wanted to get me to join her Girl Scouts. I wouldn't. She's a bum Girl Scout, she is. She's ——"

"Throw out your clutch!" said Dixon, laughing. "You'll crash gears. Don't worry about me, kid. They paid me a month ahead, and I've got a little saved up."

"Have you really?" asked Carmella eagerly. "Then dad will like you better than ever. He likes folks to save. And he likes you anyway."

"That's good!" He was beginning to wonder in what direction the talk was tending.

"He sure does," said Carmella. "Listen, Mr. Dixon, I think he's going to want you for a partner."

"For a partner! Your dad! For the love of the late Mr. Moses!"

"He was speaking about it only last night. I told him you weren't a chauffeur any more. You see, Mr. Dixon, he's getting more and more business all the time. He's going to be a big contractor some day. And he needs help—you and he could help each other get rich.

"You see, he can't talk much American, and he's poor on figures. But he knows an awful lot about jobs and men. He knows what you don't, and you know what he don't, and—and—well, you see ——"

"And we'd make a team," laughed Dixon.

"Well, you know what I mean. And I'd like it awfully well. And you'll never get rich being a chauffeur, you know, no matter how good you are at it."

Just then the nurse came hurrying down the corridor.

"Time's up!" she said sharply. "You must go now, girl."

"Dad wants to talk it over with you," Carmella said to Dixon, taking his hand and leading him slowly down the corridor. "Maybe he could come here to see you, if you want him. Will you telephone this evening and make a date?"

"Hurry up!" cried the nurse, "or I'll get called down."

"Sure I'll phone," said Dixon, as Carmella responded to the nurse's push on her shoulder by dashing for the elevator. He went back to bed, dizzy with ideas that were new to him. He had planned to own a garage some day.

That evening, again on the arm of his chair, Carmella said to Tommaso:

"I called on Mr. Dixon today."

"*Si!* But you did not speak of what you said last night?"

"Not much. Just a little, *padre*. I told him maybe you might want to talk with him."

Tommaso smoked for a time in silence, then asked:

"What did he say?"

"He was surprised. He did not know. I asked him to telephone tonight if he was interested. Will you go to the hospital to see him?"

"I have much work. When will he be well?"

"He can leave the hospital in about two weeks, the doctors told him."

"And then he could come here to talk some evening?"

"Sure he would, *padre*. But why wait? Can't you see him in the hospital?"

"It can wait till he is well," answered Tommaso, and would speak no more about it.

Carmella thought her father stubborn and slow. She fretted, lest Dixon turn to something else. When he telephoned, she explained that the business must wait

until he was out of the hospital, and criticized Tommaso as sternly as she dared.

What Carmella did not know was that Tommaso's one experience with a hospital was after the Piave in the great war, where emergency operations were performed in an ancient farmhouse with scant medical equipment.

Never again did he want to see the beds of a hospital. The thought made him sick inside.

Carmella was later to find many things which she took as a matter of course, yet which were wonderment or misery or both for her parents.

Chapter Twenty-three

AMERICAN METHODS

FOR a few days Carmella curbed her desire to rush again to Dixon. By the end of the week, however, she could wait no longer. What if he should leave, and wander out to find another job? What if he had not taken her seriously? He had! He had! But . . .

She found him dressed and sitting on a piazza.

"Hello, Kid Kate!" he exclaimed, so warmly that her fears fled. They chatted a moment before she asked:

"How soon can you leave the hospital?"

"In a few days, they say. Then I'm coming over to see your dad."

"I'm sorry he wouldn't come here. But he simply would not."

"Very wise of him. He knows better than to talk business with a sick man. I like him better for waiting."

Carmella looked at him in surprise. Her own theory was that any idea that seemed good should be put through instantly—the more instantly the better. Per-

haps—she resolved to think this over—there was virtue in waiting for the right moment.

"—and what's the best time of day to see him?" Dixon was asking.

"Who? Dad? Most any evening. He's been elected to something in the Sons of Italy, so he goes to the clubrooms some evenings. Better telephone, when you know when you can come."

"I'll do that. Listen, kid, can you keep a secret?"

"Oh, splendid!"

"Then what would you say if I told you Mrs. Barrington had been here?"

"She has? She didn't! Tell me!"

"She sure did! Yesterday. You said you boiled her for firing me. Maybe that helped. Anyway, she asked me to take the job back."

Carmella gazed in dismay.

"But—you're not going to! You're going to be with dad."

"That's to be seen. I hope so, sort of. But she's crazy to have me. It seems the new Englishman jammed her into a crash the other day, and she's fired him. She almost teased me to come."

"What did you tell her?"

"Told her I had a chance to go into business. She offered to raise my pay, and apologized for having fired me at all. Oh, yes, she did! Funny to see a dame like that apologizing to me!"

"You've got what she wanted," said Carmella sagely. "Was she mad?"

"As mad as she dared to be," he laughed.

"Don't you ever go back there!" cried Carmella explosively. The force of her emotion stood her on her feet. "Don't you dare! Come with dad! Do anything else you want to. Go to bootlegging. Or start an honest garage. But don't you ever, ever go back to that woman. She fired you for being sick."

"Soft pedal," said he, smiling. "Remember, this is a hospital."

"Good-bye, Mr. Dixon," she said, flaming hotly. "I'm sorry I blew up."

"Aw, don't go off mad. I'm with you on everything you said except running an honest garage. That'd be too strenuous for a man just out of the hospital. Sit down again! How's school?"

They chatted a few minutes, but Dixon saw the girl was ashamed of her outbreak. So he did not protest again when she started up to go.

As Carmella approached her home she was hailed by Mrs. Pieri.

"Come in and tell me what to do," she pleaded.

"About Nicolo?"

Mrs. Pieri nodded.

"Hire a lawyer," said Carmella.

"But I do not know. I do not know anything. My Nicolo, he stays away and will not talk. He—he swear at me when I ask."

"The pup!" said Carmella to herself, in English. "He's worse than I thought." Then, to the stricken mother, she said in Italian:

"Better let him take his medicine and go to jail."

But so deep a wail of grief answered her that she repented.

"Come with me," she commanded.

Together they went to Mike Laudini as he idled on the front steps.

"Listen, Mike," began Carmella, "Nicolo's in a jam."

"Is that so?" asked Mike innocently.

"Yes, and you damn' well ran away when you heard it," shouted the girl fiercely. "You got scared before you knew why he was pinched.

"Now listen, Mike Laudini, you're going to help this kid. He ain't worth a damn, but his mother is, see? I'm helping her, and you're going to."

"Say, kid," he said angrily, "who you think you're talking to?"

"I'm talking to a guy that can't afford to have an enemy that knows as much as I do. You threw Nick down, when he got into a jam. But you ain't going to throw me down. Get me?"

"Is that so! And suppose I do?"

"Then," said Carmella, in an undertone that made him listen closely, "I'll get you hooked, Mike Laudini. I know you own the police and the Feds. I know you think you're bomb-proof. But listen to this, Mike!

You don't own the uplifters. You forgot them. But I'll squeal to them. And they'll get you. You know what'll happen if they pick you for one of their grandstand plays. Even your own private judge wouldn't dare turn 'em down."

Mr. Laudini wiped his forehead with a silk handkerchief.

"Say, kid," he demanded, "where the hell did you get all that stuff? You don't know a damned thing, anyway."

"Try me!" jeered Carmella.

"Who'd I ever sell a drop to, then?"

"My dad and Mr. Barrington, for two folks. Want the dates?"

Mike shook his head sadly, the victim of circumstance.

"What do you want me to do for the kid?" he asked.

"Get him a real lawyer. Get him a soft judge. Get him probation. Get him anything but the hoosegow. And then get him to beat it away from here."

"All right! You win," he said weakly. "I'll do it."

Mike Laudini kept his word, as he always did. This was the quality which made him a trusted leader in Little Italy's affairs It was the quality on which Carmella had counted.

And so it happened that on the same day Nicolo Pieri was put on probation, with instructions to go elsewhere forever, Richard Dixon became a partner of Tommaso Coletta in the contracting business.

Dixon came to the house that night, shortly after supper. The interview, with Carmella as interpreter, quickly developed the fact that both men were in favor of the partnership. But they discussed details until Carmella was tired.

"It's a bargain, then," said Tommaso finally.

"It is a bargain," answered Dixon.

The two men shook hands, while Carmella danced.

"Now," she said, "you shall have lawyers to make papers."

"Why papers?" asked Tommaso. "We need no papers."

"In America," said Carmella, "everything needs papers. You cannot do business together without them."

"She's right," said Dixon. "It is the better way."

Carmella interpreted with obvious glee.

"Oh, you say so too," growled Tommaso. "Very well! So we shall do."

Within a week the firm of Coletta and Dixon was announced.

Across the city, on Laurel Avenue, Mrs. Barrington, who never in the world read the official notices, nevertheless saw it, and sniffed, if such an expression can be used of so refined a lady.

She called it to the attention of her husband, who chuckled softly.

"Ought to be a good firm," he commented.

"All the doings of that girl," said Mrs. Barrington, registering contempt.

"Like enough," agreed her husband, returning to the sporting pages.

Carmella's elation over a dream-come-true kept her buoyant for many days. She visioned Tommaso as one of the big business men of Little Italy. Perhaps, in time, he would grow beyond its boundaries and establish a home in a fashionable part of the city. Other Italians had. But her mother! Carmella could not see Maria fitting such a setting.

Yet of late, she reflected, she had been vaguely puzzled by a look of comprehension on her mother's face when she and the younger children were speaking English.

Maturing perceptibly in her sense of triumph over the new firm, Carmella began to display an increasing independence. Maria watched anxiously, afraid to speak, yet afraid of the consequences if she did not. She had seen many daughters of Little Italy wander in strange and perilous paths for lack of guidance.

One evening Carmella did not wait for the telephone to ring, but went to it herself, leaving the dishes untouched. Tommaso was at a lodge meeting. Sitting in the kitchen, Maria heard her call Amelia, and then:

"I'm coming over to study."

"What's that? Stay all night. Fine!"

"What? Oh, yes, I'll bring my things."

"Oh, she won't say anything. I'll just tell her I'm going."

Carmella danced back to the kitchen. It surprised her that Maria was sitting idly, instead of beginning the dishes. But she was too prancing to reflect on this.

"*Madre!*" she said in Italian. "I'm going over to Amelia's for the night."

And she turned to race upstairs for her night things.

"Carmella, you come here!"

The girl stopped short. It was her mother's voice, but using English.

"Quick, I say!"

Maria's words were sharp. The time had come!

Bewildered, Carmella walked back to the kitchen. Her mother sat as before, outwardly placid. She had rehearsed this scene so often that she had become an actress. The daughter never knew the turmoil that raged in her mother's heart. But this was Maria's moment.

"*Che cosa?*" asked Carmella.

"You—are—not—go!" said Maria, slowly but firmly.

Carmella thought quickly. Something had happened, she did not quite know what, but it was necessary to find out. Her language remained Italian.

"What do you mean, *care madre?* I'm just going to Amelia's."

"You—are—not—go!"

Carmella's wrath flamed suddenly high.

"I will go!" she shouted.

"You—are—not—go!"

"But I will!"

For a moment, in her excitement, Maria could think of none of the other phrases she had planned. But so far Carmella had not laughed at her language. This gave her courage to go on.

"You have not ask. So you do not go. You wash the deesh."

"Listen!" cried Carmella angrily. "Where do you get that stuff? Just because you can say a-b-c in our language! I'm going to Amelia's!"

Maria felt herself powered to eloquence:

"Leesten! You try to skeep. No for you! You washa the deesh! You act bad when you dare. Now you mind me. You aska me when you weesha go out."

"But I promised." Carmella realized that she was on the defensive.

"Pro-meese? Be damn! For long time you act bad. You no theenk *madre* she know nothing. Now you know. You ask when you weesh go. I tell you."

The front door opened and Tommaso entered. Maria seized the moment with true dramatic instinct. Raising her voice she cried:

"You not go! You washa deesh! You help! I say so!"

"You go to hell!" shouted Carmella, furious with anger.

Tommaso understood that phrase. Striding into the kitchen he seized Carmella by the shoulder.

"Who you say that to?" he demanded. And, to her bewildered surprise, he spoke English. She burst into tears.

Tommaso turned to his wife, and asked in Italian:

"What happens? What does this girl say? Tell me quick!"

Maria wiped her eyes with her apron and answered:

"She say 'Go to hell!' to me—to me, her mother. She refuse to do her work, so I scold her. And she say this."

Tommaso held Carmella firmly in his grasp and looked her in the eye. Speaking in Italian, slowly and deeply, he said:

"You, girl, shall mind your mother. I shall teach you, if it must be. For a week, as punishment for what you have said, you shall both wash and wipe the dishes at night. And whatever your mother says, you shall do. If you do not, I shall teach you."

"*Si, padre!*" said Carmella, bewildered and frightened.

"Now you washa the deesh!" commanded Maria, in English.

"*Si, madre!*" said the girl, and went to work.

Tommaso looked at his wife in surprise.

"You speak the English to her and she understand? How have you learned? Come here!"

He walked to the sitting room and sat in his chair,

Maria following meekly, wondering what his mood was to be.

"Where did you learn?" he asked again.

"At the Hope House."

"And you surprised Carmella?"

"Yes!"

"How long did it take you to learn?"

"I began five—six months ago."

Tommaso suddenly threw himself back in his chair and slapped its broad arms with his heavy hands.

"By God! Then I learn."

Maria slipped into his lap, and her husband's arms crept around her. It was the first love scene they had had for many a year.

Out in the kitchen Carmella washed dishes and wiped them and wept.

Chapter Twenty-four

SOCIAL READJUSTMENTS

GIUSEPPE and the younger children had been asleep when Carmella lost command. But they quickly noticed that something was changed.

After noting that for several evenings his mother had left the supper dishes entirely to Carmella, Giuseppe delayed his school work to watch her.

"Want any help, kid?" he finally volunteered.

Carmella did not answer.

"Say, kid," he went on, "how come you're doing this every night?"

"None of your business!" she snapped.

Joe grinned. He was striking fire sooner than he expected.

"Say," he asked, "where'd mother learn American so quick?"

"Ask her."

"Well, I don't get it. But you're afraid of her all of a sudden."

Presently he touched her elbow as she passed, so that she dropped a cup. For answer, she swept a swift hand against her brother's face. The battle was begun.

Giuseppe was small and dark and wiry. Carmella was much the larger, and fully as quick. In a moment she had him on the kitchen floor and was raining blows on his face. Tommaso appeared in the doorway.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Stop it!"

"He hit me and made me break a cup," screamed Carmella.

"She tripped me and beat me," retorted Giuseppe.

Tommaso sent the boy to his mother. To Carmella he said:

"When you have finished the dishes, you go to bed."

"But my lessons!" exclaimed Carmella.

"Your lesson is to mind your parents."

Maria had ordered Giuseppe to bed, speaking in English, and he had gone without reply. Another triumph of language, she knew.

"Did you strap him?" asked Tommaso, returning from the kitchen.

"No, I sent him to bed."

"Do you wish me to whip?"

"It is not needed, I think."

Here Maria found still another angle of her new importance. Never before had Tommaso sent a child to her for discipline.

"*Che magia!*" she thought. What magic!

In the days that followed the children adopted a new motto:

"Mind mother."

More wisdom than even the trained Miss Sargle of Hope House had ever learned was in this change of front. Mrs. Barrington, patroness of Americanization, would never comprehend it.

Father Carbone could have taught them. Or genial Pat Cunningham, who patrolled the region of Hope House in a blue uniform, and represented law and order to that part of Little Italy.

Unfortunately for the cause, it never occurred to Hope House workers to take lessons from those best qualified to teach.

Nicolo's mother came to visit Maria, and she was weeping.

"Alas me!" she said. "My Nicolo has left and forgotten me."

"Where has he gone?"

"I do not know. After he was put on probation Mike told him to leave town. He has gone, but he has not written."

"He will come back," said Maria soothingly.

"But if he comes back, he cares not for me," the woman sobbed. "He will not mind. He has not minded me since his father died."

"And you did not make him?" asked Maria.

"How could I? He spoke in this new talk, and never could I make him answer in 'the' language when he did not want to."

"Did you speak English to him?"

"*Santo Dio!* How could I? I do not know it."

"Then you could not command your boy," said Maria simply.

"But your children—they behave—and you ——"

"I spika da Eenglish," said Maria, in her new tongue.

"What?"

"I have learned to speak the *Inglesi*. I speak the language of my children."

"You? When? How long? You!"

"Since a long time," said Maria, fibbing easily. And she went on:

"You cannot command children who speak other than you do. I tried, and could not do it. So I learned to speak the American. It is a silly language, with many rules. But it can be learned."

"*Mio Dio!* Where did you learn, Maria?"

"At Hope House."

"I go with you next time." said Mrs. Pieri.

Chapter Twenty-five

PROMISES ARE PROMISES

"BUT," said Tommaso, "we must not promise more than we can do."

"Absolutely not!" agreed Dixon. "But this we can do."

Tommaso smiled as Carmella translated. He was discovering that he liked Dixon. Their ideas seemed in tune at every important point.

This was one of their frequent evening conferences about jobs and contracts. Both were cheerful, because business was developing more rapidly than either had hoped.

Tommaso was gradually winning a reputation for reliability. Honest work was his instinct. He had learned it in Italy. In this new country he had seen men flourish for a time, and then disappear for lack of it. He decided that there were some American ideas of haste and slipshod work which were not good.

Dixon met his standards. And Dixon had developed a strange versatility. He drove trucks, kept in touch with the market, wrote contracts, and had an instinctive sense for new business.

His energy and acquaintance brought contracts to

which Tommaso alone never would have aspired. One day he met Mr. Barrington on the street, and the latter stopped him.

"Who's this Coletta you're in with?" he asked. "Name sounds familiar."

"Remember the wop kid out at the Greendale plat?"

"You bet I do! Little she-hellion that Mrs. B. had at the house."

"That's the one."

"I remember her all right. Only kid that ever sassed me and got away with it. Bright kid! Her old man takes after her, as I remember."

"Well, he gets there when he starts."

Mr. Barrington laughed.

"Had any big jobs yet?" he asked.

"Big by being groups of small ones, yes! But no downtown work yet. We're headed for it, though. Got any for us?"

"Well, I'm going to have a big job before long. I'm moving downtown. Suburban work's too chancy. Want to bid on it?"

"We'll tackle anything, including foundations now, just so long as it doesn't involve foundations of neighboring buildings. I haven't quite mastered that trick yet."

Mr. Barrington thought a moment.

"By George, you're on!" he said. "Keep in touch with me. Send your address to my secretary and tell her I said to file it."

"Thank you, Mr. Barrington. That's fine!"

"All o. k. You may get the job; may not. But I'll take a chance. You were a good chauffeur. Mrs. Barrington ——"

"That's all right," said Dixon. "Forget it! It was a good turn for me."

That same night he was in Tommaso's home, telling of the interview, when Tommaso said "we must not promise more than we can do."

"We can do it, all right," said Dixon.

These business interviews were a curious medley of speech. Tommaso knew some American, including profanity. Dixon knew a few Italian phrases. Carmella sat between them, understanding both.

Sometimes they went on without her. But anything complicated called for her services as interpreter.

"If we can do it, we shall do it," said Tommaso.

"Won't it be grand!" exclaimed Carmella. "We'll be millionaires pretty soon, Mr. Dixon."

She danced across the floor, and blew him a kiss.

"Not too soon, kid," warned Dixon.

She danced across the floor till Tommaso thundered:

"Sit down! When I wish dancing, I will ask you. Now you ask Mr. Dixon how long notice we must give to hire steam shovels."

"Mr. Dixon," said Carmella, "Mr. Coletta would like to know how much notice to get those steam shovels, and if you ever get me called down like that again I'll hate you for life."

"You did it yourself, kid, and you know you did. Tell him that three days' notice is what I've bargained for. And if you get gay with me, I'll call another interpreter and tell your dad and you'll get spanked."

Carmella interpreted the business part of this statement to her father, and stuck out her tongue at Dixon.

It was in this fashion that many of their interviews were carried on, until one night Dixon asked:

"Why don't you teach me Italian, kid?"

Carmella hesitated. These verbal games were fun. But she knew they could not go on. And after all her great desire was to see the firm prosper.

"I'll teach you," she said, and turning to her father:

"Mr. Dixon wishes to learn Italian. I will teach him. And, *caro padre*, I will teach you American."

Tommaso thought as he smoked for some minutes.

"That would be good," he finally said.

So the lessons began. To be teaching Dixon was a positive thrill.

There was a thrill, too, in being on her father's various jobs the vacation after her graduation from grammar school. Dixon was downtown more than he was on the jobs. He was the financial man. And often he visited foundation jobs on which other contractors were at work. He was learning. Once he let Carmella go with him.

They stood watching the excavations for a new trust company building.

"How long before we'll be able to do that?" she asked.

"Not so long. I got a few things to learn yet."

"I'll help you," said Carmella.

"But you won't always be in the contracting business, kid," he said.

"What'll I be doing?"

"You'll be going to school first, and then you'll be cooking sausage and making beds and spanking babies and all that sort of thing."

"But I'll do outside work too. Mrs. Barrington keeps house and does. I'll always be interested in contracting."

"Mrs. Barrington didn't spank her kids enough and she did too much outside work," said Dixon. "But you'll be different."

"I hope to God I'll be different from Mrs. Barrington. But I'll always be interested in contracting, whether it's dad, or—or anyone."

"You're going to high school next fall, aren't you, kid?" he suddenly asked.

"Sure!"

"And you'll study hard?"

"Why? You want me to? All right, I will!"

Dixon spent that night wondering and dreaming of who would be foreman of his future household. The next day he spoke to Tommaso:

"Ask me over to the Sons of Italy club tonight, will you?"

"We talk *senza* Carmella?" asked the father.

"We talk what I talk without her."

"All right," said Tommaso. "Eight o'clock."

Dixon entered the Sons of Italy clubroom promptly at eight, to find Tommaso already there. He looked around the main lounge and pointed to an empty corner. They sat down, and smoked in silence, until Dixon said:

"We got good business, Mr. Coletta."

Tommaso nodded.

"It will grow bigger."

"What?"

"Business. More and more big." Dixon stretched his arms like a man telling a fish story.

"*Si!*" Tommaso nodded. "Bees-ness, she grow, yes!"

"You got nice girl, too," said Dixon.

"Carmella? She nice keed!"

"She grow big. She go to school. She finish—fee-nish—she out—in four year."

"*Si, si!*"

"She nineteen years, then."

Tommaso smoked in silence. Dixon doubted how much he had understood. It was one of his tricks, like that of a deaf person, to understand more English when he wanted to, and less when he chose.

"Listen, Mr. Coletta," began Dixon again. "Carmella—she nineteen years when she feenish school. Old enough to marry. Marry. See?"

"*Si!*"

Dixon threw away his cigarette and lit another nervously.

"Carmella fine girl now—fine girl then. I like her now. I love her then. You say yes to Carmella marry me then?"

"She keed," said Tommaso.

"Now, yes! But when she feenish school."

"Then I tell you then."

And Tommaso filled and lighted his pipe with all the air of a clubman. Few more words were said. But as they parted at the door, Tommaso offered his hand, saying:

"I lika you, Carmella lika you. Maybe you marry —sometime."

Dixon shook hands with his senior partner, and said one word:

"Thanks!"

Chapter Twenty-six

CARMELLA LOOKS AHEAD

THE next evening, after supper, Tommaso settled himself in his chair with his pipe, and called Carmella to him. It was Saturday, and all day she had been with him and Dixon, out near Greendale, on a new contract.

Tommaso had noticed that his partner was teaching the girl to drive the small automobile which their business now warranted, for errand-running in and out of town. She would be old enough for a driver's license soon.

She responded to her father's call by curling on the arm of his chair, and he put his arm around her. Although this was the usual hour for his lesson in English, he began to speak in Italian.

"You like Dixon?" he asked abruptly.

"Surely, *padre!* He is a wonderful man. I'm going to marry him some day."

Tommaso nearly lost the pipe from his mouth in his surprise. He closed his teeth on it, and smoked in silence for a few minutes, hoping not to betray his emotion. Finally he spoke:

"But not till you finish school, *carissima*."

"No, not until I finish school. But sometime."

"Dixon is a fine man, that is true."

"I'm glad you think so, *padre*. Then you want me to marry him?"

"We shall see. We shall see."

"I hope you'll like it, because I'm going to do it."

"Does he want you, little one?"

"He will. I even think he does now, a little."

Tommaso smiled.

"Now to teach me to speak the English," he said, reflecting that it was her teaching that had enabled him to discuss her with Dixon the night before. He took pride in the interview.

Dixon, on his part, knew well that he was in love with Carmella—in love with her as a child; in love with the woman he felt sure she would be. Moreover, she was already approaching the age when it was not uncommon for girls of Little Italy to marry. There were many brides of sixteen, though it meant bewildered parental visits to the license bureau.

Dixon, however, had no such intention. He himself was slightly over twenty-one; he would be twenty-five when Carmella finished high school. He intended that she should have those years in school while he was establishing himself as a business man.

Meanwhile, Tommaso's answer had given him the right to feel like an older brother—the right to help her when he could.

Before school opened that autumn Carmella had

learned to operate the machine, and as a driver had won even Dixon's critical praise. He had taught her that careful driving was more to be desired than skillful chance taking. Once, when she had been reckless, he refused to let her touch the wheel for a week. After that, she obeyed.

He had been afraid about that—afraid it would cost him her goodwill. He would have been staggered had he known that few things had ever given her a greater thrill, and that she had boasted about it to Tommaso.

"You see, *padre mio*," she had said. "He is a man to be trusted. You need have no fear in giving me to him."

"We shall see, when the time comes," replied her father.

"When the time comes, you will be glad to have such a man want your Carmella," she said.

Her entrance to high school was an event. She was absorbed by the opening vista of new knowledge. And for some reason she could not fathom, she felt a new and lively interest in learning. She felt like a conqueror over every lesson.

At home, the family conversation gradually came to be more and more in English. Maria, now frankly letting Carmella help her with words and sentences, was able to speak the new tongue far better than her husband. But also she was more sensitive to ridicule.

Little Enrico was inclined to laugh at some of his mother's errors. But, laughing once too often and

more loudly than was wise, he was disciplined by his father in a way that cured him for all time.

"Mrs. Barrington, she weesh see you, Carmella," said Maria one night in the early winter.

"What does she want?"

"I not know. She ask me that I tell you. She at Hope House after school *domani*."

"Wants me to be a Girl Scout, I'll bet."

"Not the Scout. She said tell you it."

Carmella chuckled. Evidently Mrs. Barrington remembered. Carmella's first thought was to refuse to go. But life was branching out. Perhaps it would be interesting.

The next afternoon found her facing Mrs. Barrington once more in the latter's office in the settlement house.

"How do you do, Kid Kate!" said Mrs. Barrington, extending her hand.

Carmella accepted it doubtfully and answered:

"Very well, thank you. How's your chauffeur?"

"Bless me! He's all right, I think." Mrs. Barrington was once more out of poise for an instant. In some fashion Carmella, while staying within the bounds of surface politeness, always managed to irritate her.

For an instant she was tempted to send the girl away. But Miss Sargle had impressed on her the importance of this interview.

"I've a very good chauffeur now," she said. "How is Dixon, by the way? I hear he's with your father."

"Dixon's fine. Making more money now than he ever could as chauffeur, and I'm going to marry him."

"Marry him! Bless my soul! Why, Kate, you're only a child."

"When I finish school I'll be nineteen."

"Oh-h!"

For a moment Mrs. Barrington sat and stared. Then she said:

"Has he asked you to?"

"Oh, no, but he will when I finish school."

Mrs. Barrington was bewildered. This modern generation! Her own Margaret was having strange ideas, but none like this.

"That's very nice, I'm sure," she said at last. "But now I want to talk to you about something else. How would you like to be assistant to Miss Sargle here at Hope House?"

Carmella stared in turn. This was a new vista. She was accustomed to responsibility, but here was more than she had foreseen.

"But I go to school," she protested.

"Of course. And you'd keep on going. This wouldn't take you out of school at all. Miss Sargle needs more help than she has. You could come over two or three afternoons a week, after school, and then help in the Tuesday and Friday evening classes, and be here all day Saturday."

"Gee!" exclaimed Carmella.

Behind this offer was more than the girl knew. Hope House, frankly, was not going very well. Few mothers were interested, and children were dropping out. Those who still came would not behave. Miss Sargle herself lacked the human touch.

In looking about for a helper who could really help, Miss Sargle had remembered Carmella. The girl had always been a leader. In her anxiety—which was in reality an anxiety to retain her position—Miss Sargle had visited Principal Carroll of the grammar school Carmella had attended.

"She'd be your ideal!" he replied promptly. "She can whip her weight in wildcats. And what's more, she does it."

He recounted a playground incident when Carmella had soundly punished a group of quarreling children.

"The funny part of it was," he went on, "that she didn't make enemies of them. She's got personality. In all my experience, I never saw a youngster her age with so much of it. Get her, and your troubles with other children are over, even if she licks them all the first week."

Miss Sargle had urged Carmella on Mrs. Barrington with almost suspicious earnestness.

"You understand," Mrs. Barrington continued, "that this would be paid for. You'd have a salary."

Carmella's eyes shone.

"How much?" she demanded.

"Well, of course we haven't any too much money. But I think we could pay you fifteen dollars a week."

Mentally, Carmella tumbled from her chair. Mentally, she turned a handspring. Mentally, she fainted. Fifteen dollars a week! For bossing a few kids!

"I'll come," she said.

"Splendid! And when can you begin?"

"Now."

"That's nice! This is Tuesday. Could you come this evening?"

"Sure! That is, I suppose I can. If dad will let me. I'll have to ask him, of course. What time will I begin?"

"About seven-thirty. Now suppose you go in and talk with Miss Sargle about the work."

It proved that Miss Sargle didn't know exactly what she wanted Carmella to do. She wanted results, but the methods she couldn't describe. She rambled in her discussion of the problem till Carmella cut her short:

"What you really want, Miss Sargle, is more kids, more interest, and better behaved. Is that right?"

"Well—yes!"

"All right! You'll get 'em, all three. I may have to beat up a few kids, but they'll be here and they'll mind.

"You see, Miss Sargle, the trouble with you is you don't know kids and you don't know wops. All you know is what you learned out of a book. That's the bunk. You gotta get down to cases and know folks.

I'll pull this thing through, but you gotta do what I say. If I tell you to kiss a dirty wop kid, you kiss him. See? I'll tell you why afterwards."

After Carmella had two-stepped home—for that is what she did—Miss Sargle sat for a long, long time at her desk, thinking. And the thinking she did just then was perhaps the longest educational step she had ever taken.

Carmella could hardly control her joy. She was to be an executive—a boss. Dearly did she love to boss. Her standing with her family and her friends was certain to rise. And—Dixon!

Maria and Tommaso listened to her story.

"I do not know this Hope House," said Tommaso. He looked across at his wife. And so slightly that the keen-eyed Carmella did not see, Maria nodded. She knew Hope House. Her heart was high with pride that her daughter had been asked to help manage it.

"All right, Carmella," said Tommaso. "When do you begin?"

"Tonight."

Tommaso laughed.

Dixon did not call at the cottage for several evenings. When he did, it was on one of Carmella's nights at Hope House. She was putting on her coat when he arrived. Breathlessly she explained her new work to him, and announced the pay with a flourish.

"Bully for you, kid!" said Dixon. "But listen!

Don't get so interested in this up-up stuff that you forget—well, you know, other things."

Carmella laughed joyously.

"Anybody that has to be uplifted isn't worth it," she said. "These damn Americanizationers make me sick. I'm through with this job the day I finish school. I'm making money now, and not hurting myself. But I'm never going to forget that I'm a member of the firm—or going to be."

Dixon restrained his impulse to take her in his arms.

But ——

All the way to Hope House Carmella felt as if she had been thus seized and held. And she loved the feeling.

After Dixon had gone away, Maria sat on the arm of Tommaso's chair, and spoke of the pay that Carmella was to have.

"It is not too much," said Tommaso.

"N-no!" admitted Maria. Though privately she was bewildered at the sum. "But now she shall buy her own clothes, is it not so?"

Tommaso puffed his pipe in long silence. Then:

"She shall put her money in the bank for the time. It is I who shall pay for what she needs while she is a child. Thank God I can!"

"But she earns so much," urged Maria.

"Not too much! Remember, wife of mine, that our daughter knows much. She is worth much. And this is America. She gets what she is worth."

"But so much money!"

"She shall put her money in the bank for the time when she is a wife and when she is a mother."

"Whose wife?" asked Maria.

"You know, *carissima*."

And Maria, who never before had done such a thing, laughed a hearty American laugh.

THE END